

UNIVERSITY OF WINCHESTER

Children as experts in infant school transitions

Megan Taddeo

ORCID 0000-0002-3579-7430

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Abstract

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When young children move settings, phase or year group or from one style of pedagogy to another their power status is diminished and they encounter shifts in identity and agency (Clark and Moss 2005; Ecclestone, Hayes, Biesta and Hughes 2009). In England the transit from Reception to Year One traditionally involves an abrupt change from play-based curriculum to more formal approaches to learning (Fisher 2010; OCC 2006; Brooker 2002; Dockett and Perry 2007). Changes in teaching style and curriculum place new expectations on children, making transition particularly disempowering (Fabian and Dunlop 2007; Griebel and Niesel 2000). Giving children control of the transition process and involving them in research into transition is one way of addressing imbalances (Dockett and Perry 1999; Clark and Moss 2005).

Situated in England, this study used a qualitative participatory methodology to enable a class of five and six-year-old children to become co-researchers. The children acted as experts in the transition from a play-based to more formal curriculum, researching their recent transition and using their experiences to support new groups of children. Thus, they became key 'brokers' in transition (Wenger 1998). A group of seven and eight-year-old children in a different school also contributed their perspectives to the study, reflecting on their involvement in a pilot study and transition at a later phase.

I draw on the work of Foucault (1991), Giddens (1984), Bronfenbrenner (1989), Bernstein (1975), Gibson (1979) and Lave and Wenger (1991) to critically analyse the theoretical and methodological links between children's participation in research, voice and perceptions of themselves as experts. I explore power relations from two interrelated perspectives: as a Year One teacher with a commitment to ensure that young children's transition is a positive experience; as a teacher who has recently transited from Reception to Year One.

My findings indicate that, although Year One discourse can prioritise and silence different types of learning, children can effectively negotiate the new maze and

can help others to do so. Engaging children fully gave them greater access to voice and encouraged agency.

Key Words: Power, Transition, Knowledge, Children's voice, Brokerage

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Chapter 1. Introduction

This thesis reports on a study in which a cohort of five and six-year-old children in England researched their most recent transition and used their experiences to support new children as they began their transition from a play-based curriculum to more formal approaches to learning. The thesis also presents the perspectives of a group of seven and eight-year-old children in a different school, who reflected on their involvement in a pilot for this study and on transition at a later phase. The study uses a qualitative participatory methodology. It explores power relations during transition drawing on the work of key theorists, including Foucault (1979), Giddens (1984), Bronfenbrenner (1989), Bernstein (1975), Gibson (1979) and Lave and Wenger (1991).

In this chapter I contextualise my research. First, I deliberate ‘power’ in the context of early childhood education and relate it to the politicisation of early childhood education and care nationally and internationally. Next, I provide a brief outline of my positioning, interests and relationships with other members of staff who were involved in this study. This is followed by a description of the current transition process in our school. I then introduce the key aim of my research, my research objectives and the questions my research will answer. I conclude the chapter with an outline of the thesis.

In this chapter (and all others) cross referencing to related areas of the thesis is accessible by using the highlight + ctrl + click function on page numbers provided in brackets, for example, Ofsted 2017 (see p.54).

1.1 Power in Early Childhood Education

MacNaughton (2005: 27) describes power as a 'relationship of struggle over how we use truths and build discourses about normality to produce and regulate ourselves'. Institutionally produced and sanctioned truths govern and control us (Foucault 1984), exercising power over our thoughts and actions and prevailing our perceptions of truth (Moss 2017). Organised bodies of knowledge, such as pedagogy, produce power struggles as they attempt to construct a set of truths about what is normal and what is not (ibid). Officially sanctioned truths network together to reinforce a particular view of the world (Cohen 2008). They form 'dominant discourses' (Moss 2017:11), or 'regimes of truth' (Foucault 1984: 301), which in turn produce 'relations of domination' (MacNaughton 2005: 20).

Foucault (2007: 274) refers to the processes by which we are governed as 'disciplinary technologies' or 'technologies of government'. He uses the term 'governmentality' (Foucault, 1983:221) to describe the process by which governments manage their citizens in order to meet their own interests, whilst also preventing threats to those interests (Ball 1990, Rose 1999). From the perspective of governmentality, governments use subtle, non-coercive (Dahlerg and Moss 2005) 'multiform tactics' to shape the interests of their citizens and bring them in line with their own (Foucault, 1991, 95).

The rise of audit societies (Power 1997) has contributed to the framing of regulation in government discourses as a legitimate and effective means of public accountability (Fenech and Sumsion 2007). Some critics use Foucault's notions of power and control to conjecture that regulatory frameworks are technologies of government and subjectification (Cannella 2000, Grieshaber and Cannella 2001). Grounded predominantly in consumerism and supported by an 'internationally rampant vision of schooling, teaching and learning based solely on systematic

efficacy at the measurable technical' production of human capital (Luke 2005: 17), the growing global policy interest in early childhood education focuses mainly on quality and high returns (Moss, 2017). Moss (2017: 17) believes that this discourse has been developed into a regime of truth by an 'exceptionally strong nexus of power relations', including organisations such as the UNESCO, OECD and the European Union, who base their recommendations on research findings that 'cannot be assumed to be generalisable elsewhere' (Penn et al. 2006).

In England policy documents, such as *Every Child Matters* (Department of Education and Skills (DfES) 2004) and the *Ten Year Strategy* (HM Treasury (DFES) 2005), amongst a surfeit of other texts, produced by or for the government, demonstrate the government's intention to overhaul early childhood education to meet the social and economic needs of society (Osgood 2006). These documents form part of the 'normalising technologies' through which the 'power elite' (Government departments and agencies) (Osgood 2006: 6) position subordinate individuals (practitioners) within a network of objective codification (Foucault 1978).

Early childhood institutions are increasingly seen as places for technical practice, where society can 'apply powerful human technologies to children in order to produce predetermined outcomes' (Moss 2017:7). Education for the youngest children is progressively governed by dominant discourse (Moss 2017:11). Regimes of truth (Foucault 1984:301) are used as an indicator of good, bad and normal early years education (MacNaughton 2005, Osgood 2006). They marginalise and silence alternative truths (Allwood 2003, Fenech and Sumsion 2007, Cohen 2008, Moss 2017), define how early childhood educators understand and organise children (MacNaughton 2001) and naturalise existing relations of power (Foucault 1984). McNay (1992) and Haugaard (2002) contend that the officially sanctioned truths that early childhood educators often accept as fact are

really ways of thinking and a form of social control. Early childhood education services have become sites of disciplinary power (Foucault 1977), in which disempowered educators (weighed down by regulatory accountabilities) comply with normalised technical practices (Grieshaber 2002, Duncan 2004).

Early childhood educators in England are increasingly subjected to a 'disempowering, regulatory gaze in the name of higher standards' (Osgood 2006: 5). Disciplinary power is present and indiscernible (Foucault 1980) in the monitoring and inspection practices of Ofsted, local education authorities and senior leadership teams who evaluate schools, teachers and classrooms using criteria created by regimes of truth that have become established as fact. Utilising a standardised measurement of right versus wrong (Lubeck 1998) to assess the practices of organisations and individuals produces a power of normalisation (Foucault 1995), thus normalising the regime of truth upon which the measurement was based (Osgood 2006). The process of normalisation is intensified by classroom teachers who accept the invisible power of guidelines and conform to the regimes of truth (Cohen 2008). Their students continue the normalisation process by also accepting and conforming to the regimes of truth they encounter at school (ibid).

Government endorsed regimes of truth produce dominant and externally imposed constructs of professionalism (Osgood 2006). The discourse of professionalism regulates and controls early years practitioners in their attempts to satisfy the demands of performativity and 'technicist practice'. It creates 'docile bodies as subjects that yield to the governing discourse' (Osgood 2006: 5) and leaves little time for practitioners to engage in 'meaningful critiques of the status quo' thus contributing to the process of normalisation (ibid: 5).

Cohen (2008) uses the internationally accepted discourse of ‘developmentally appropriate practice’ (Bredenkamp and Copple 1987, 1997, 2009) to exemplify the way in which influential organisations and political institutions use their power to produce the ‘regimes of truth’ that govern early childhood education and practice (MacNaughton 2005:30) (See p.42). ‘Where there is power, there is resistance’ (Foucault 1978: 95), however, and there are alternatives to the discourses in early childhood education (Moss 2017). These discourses are ‘varied, vibrant and vocal’, muted by dominant discourse, but ‘readily heard by those who listen’ (Moss 2017: 12).

1.2 Background

I am a class teacher in a one form entry infant school in the south of England. My school forms part of a federation of three small schools which share resources and work closely together under the leadership of an executive head teacher and governing body. A focus of our federation action plan is improving the quality of transition across the three schools. The issue of transition, however, is one that I have been grappling with for some time.

Whilst practicing as a Reception Teacher I completed a Masters Study (Taddeo 2011) which explored children’s perspectives of the transition from pre-school to Reception and how children who had recently experienced transition could support other children moving into Reception. During this study I began to consider how other transitions impacted on children and, in particular, how a similar approach could be used to support the children’s next educational transition. This interest led me to commence a doctoral study.

At the inception of my study I was still working as a Reception teacher in the same post. This was a position I had enjoyed for seven years. I had developed my

knowledge and confidence as an early years practitioner and I was empowered in my role. Part way through my doctoral study I moved to another school in the federation to take up the post of Year One Teacher. Within this new role I was neither knowledgeable nor confident. There was a new curriculum to get used to; different expectations; more paperwork and a totally different pedagogy. I had to rely on more experienced colleagues to guide me through the mysteries of Year One. I felt vulnerable and disempowered. This experience heightened my awareness of the shifts in power that take place during times of transition and the wider effects of power. If as an adult I was experiencing this acute sense of disempowerment, the feeling was likely to be far greater for young children. Hence, my specific interest in the dynamics of power that operate for children during transition and how shifting power balances¹ can be deployed to support the transition process evolved during the course of my study, in light of my experiences and deeper reading.

As the project developed, I became aware of how closely the children's experiences fitted with my own. My personal experiences of the transition from Reception to Year One sensitised me to the nuances of what the children were saying and thus became a powerful research tool. So began a parallel journey of transition during which I shared some of the same experiences and feelings as my cohort of Year One children. As my knowledge of transition, power and research developed, I also began to see the potential of involving children in participatory research as a tool for addressing power imbalances in transition.

In this study I explore power relations during times of transition in my own immediate context from two interrelated perspectives: as a Year One teacher with

¹ When using the term 'shifting balances of power' in the context of this study, I refer to the way in which an individual's power status in relation to others may change at different points in their life and in response to differing contexts. For example, when a person transits from a community that is familiar to them to a new community, their status may change from that of expert to novice. This is a notion I will be discuss in more detail throughout in this thesis).

a commitment to ensure that young children's transition into Year One is a positive experience; as a teacher who has recently transited from Reception to Year One.

1.2.1 Professional Relationships

Our school has four members of teaching staff: a 'Head of Learning' (whose weekly timetable balances three full days of teaching in Year Two² with two days of senior leadership responsibilities), a part-time Year Two teacher (who job shares with the Head of Learning), one full time Reception³ teacher and myself (the full time Year One⁴ teacher). In addition, the school employs four full-time and three part-time teaching assistants. Each class is supported by at least one class-based teaching assistant throughout the school day. Other teaching assistants provide support for individual children and groups of children with additional needs, for example, behavioural or speech and language.

Martinez (2011: 1) refers to the quality of relationships between and among professionals in school environments as 'school collegiality'. Collegial relationships among teachers and teaching assistants are the prerequisite to school improvement and make innovative practice and knowledge sharing possible (Fullan 2001). Due to the compact size of our school⁵ and the relatively small number of teaching staff, teachers and teaching assistants assume multiple roles and responsibilities within the school community⁶ and most staff have regular daily contact with all of their colleagues across the school (Stanley 2011). Teachers and teaching assistants often discuss school issues informally over coffee or lunch in the staff room. Formal

² Year Two: a class for 6-7-year-old children.

³ Reception: a class for 4-5-year-old children.

⁴ Year One: a class for 5-6-year-old children.

⁵ Our school has 3 compact classrooms, an additional room which doubles up as a work space and library, a hall space which is used for worship, P.E., lunch, sports club and before and after school clubs, a staffroom with seating for approximately 10 people and two small offices where the administration staff and Head of Learning work.

⁶ Multiple roles and responsibilities: one of our teaching assistants, for example, runs the before and after school club and co-ordinates a parental support group.

staff meetings for teaching staff are held once a week. Teachers use this time to discuss issues and ideas concerning their own classrooms as well as the wider school, thus tapping into 'local expertise and the collective wisdom that thoughtful teachers can generate by working together' (Feiman-Nemser 2001: 1,042). In my experience, this collaborative and triangulated approach to teaching and learning is mutually supportive and one of the benefits of teaching in a small school (Weingarten 2010).

Stanley (2011: 73), however, cautions that a group of teachers 'can work together to either reinvent and improve teaching practice or simply reinforce the status quo'. Little (2003: 939) suggests that a tightly knit professional community can 'replace the isolated classroom teacher with the isolated teacher group and balkanized workplace'. Community members may foster an environment that is intolerant of conflict, explicitly or subtly control who is allowed to join, or demand obedience to norms established by only a few members (Stanley 2011). A community can support uniformity or mediocrity as much as creativity or innovation (ibid). In order to minimise the negative effects of working within a small teaching group, staff from our school meet at least once a month with teachers across our school federation. We also attend year group network meetings with other local schools.

Martinez (2011) highlights tensions that can occur between teachers who hold different pedagogical beliefs. Bryce-Clegg (2017), in particular, draws attention to the rift that is often apparent between teachers who are committed to a play-based pedagogy and those whose practice is situated within more formal approaches to teaching and learning. My experience of teaching was predominantly situated within the early years, consequently my pedagogical beliefs were firmly grounded in the principles of play based learning. The Head of Learning also had a strong background of teaching in the early years. Rather than working at odds with the Reception class teacher, therefore, we valued a similar approach to teaching and learning. Our working relationship was mutually supportive, often drawing on each other's expertise, sharing ideas and resources. All staff agreed that the transition from Reception to Year One in our school could be improved.

During this study the Year One class was supported by a full-time teaching assistant, who also became a partner in the research. I considered my relationship with the teaching assistant to be positive. We liaised closely throughout the school day and I valued her ideas and opinions. The teaching assistant had been working in Year One for two years prior to my transition. Her knowledge and experience were particularly helpful during my first year as Year One teacher as she was able to guide me through the current practice and routines. She had only worked in Year One and, thus, had no experience of play based teaching and learning. This could have been a barrier (Wilson and Bedford 2008), however, over the course of this study I found her to be receptive to change and willing to trial new ways of working in Year One.

Wilson and Bedford (2008) highlight other tensions relating to the working relationship between teachers and teaching assistants which caused me to question if our relationship was a genuine partnership between two equal adults or a hierarchical one. Butt and Lance (2005), for example, believe that a teaching assistant's contributions can be hindered by preconceptions about their abilities and hierarchical patterns of employment in teaching. Howes (2003) found that relationships between teachers and teaching assistants focused more frequently on leadership and management rather than the partnership aspects of adults working together in the learning environment. Additionally, the pay differential between teachers and their teaching assistants made partnership difficult (Moyle and Suschitzky 1997; Parker and Townsend 2005). I was aware that the teaching assistant's involvement in the research study could add to her workload without financial compensation. Integrating the study into the Year One curriculum, however, helped to make the workload purposeful and manageable without extending her hours of work or negatively impacting on the support she provided for the children. I understood that some concerns arising from my familiarity with the child participants, for example with regard to consent and dissent, were similarly applicable to my relationship with the teaching assistant and thus required me to adopt comparable precautions. It was possible, for example, that our close working relationship made it difficult for the teaching assistant to dissent (p.157).

Dixon (2003) identified insufficient non-contact time for teachers and teaching assistants to

plan together, to consider strategies and to evaluate their success as another barrier to a professional partnership (Dixon 2003). Butt and Lance (2005) found it common practice for essential communication to take place at times when the teaching assistant was not being paid. I also found it hard to secure sufficient 'talk time' with the teaching assistant. She was paid to work between 8.50am and 3.10pm, effectively starting and finishing at the same time as the children. She had a young family and was, thus, unable to arrive at school any earlier or stay later than her official working hours. Consequently, we were restricted to quick catchups throughout the school day.

1.3 Reception to Year One transition process in our school

At the beginning of this study children's transitions from Reception to Year One were supported by a number of 'official' and 'unofficial', planned and unplanned activities and events. The main 'official' transition event happened sometime within the last three weeks of the summer term when children across the school were given the opportunity to experience half a day in their new classroom with their new teacher and teaching assistant(s). This event was commonly known as 'Move up Day'. Also, on 'Move Up Day' the oldest children in the school visited the Junior School and the new intake of children visited the Reception environment. 'Move up Day' activities were planned by the individual class teachers so children's experiences on this visit varied. Often, they would engage in some kind of 'getting to know you' activity and spend time exploring the classroom. Another 'official' transition event was the 'Moving On' puppet show. This was performed by a local church group who came into our school approximately four times a year to address prominent issues, such as bullying, in a fun and lively way through puppetry. It was popular with most children. During the second half of the summer term the Year One teacher also made a series of planned visits (approximately one a week) to the Reception class to share a story with the children.

In addition to planned and 'official' transition events, there were also a number of 'official' events that were not specifically planned to support transition, but nevertheless contributed to the transition process in our school. The summer fayre for example, provided an opportunity for children to engage with other year groups and meet adults from across the school. Unplanned and 'unofficial' transition processes also took place. A child in Reception might be taken to the Year One classroom to 'show off' their good writing or mathematics to the Year One teacher. There were some processes in our school which contributed to children's transition experiences in a less positive manner. One of the more advanced stages in our behaviour management procedure, for example, involved children being sent to another classroom to reflect on their behaviour. Reception children were usually sent to Year One. The experience impacted significantly on young children and on their experiences of transition.

1.4 Year One Discourse

It was during official and unofficial transition processes that many new children started to form an understanding of Year One discourse. The discourse in Year One at the start of this study was, in part, a product of regimes of truth. It was driven by the top-down pressure of unrealistic and inappropriate expectations for child development (Bryce-Clegg 2017). It was also at odds with early years discourse, yet consistent with the discourse across the whole primary phase (Fisher 2010).

Pedagogical approaches to learning in Year One were quite different to pedagogical approaches in the early years. The early years pedagogy supported 'unique' children 'to progress at their own pace' (DCSF 2008: para. 1.13). Planning began with the children's current needs, interests and capacities. This encouraged independence and enabled children to take ownership of their learning.

In Year One, teachers working within the demands of the National Curriculum, felt obliged to adopt more formal approaches to learning (Bryce-Clegg 2017). Children were often treated as a homogeneous group of learners, working towards universal outcomes to whole-class objectives within a prescribed curriculum (Fisher, 2010). This negated the agency they had experienced in the early years, supporting a discourse of uniformed dependency.

In their endeavors to achieve performance management targets and maximise pupil progress and attainment, teachers prioritised the teaching and learning of reading, writing and maths, often at the expense of other subjects. Recognition of children's achievements also focused mainly on these same three high profile subjects. These measures conveyed messages about what was valued and important in Year One.

Operating within a climate of performativity (Roberts Holmes 2014), teachers asserted control over children's time, space and access to resources. This practice contributed to a regulative discourse, which portrayed Year One adults as 'strict'. It also supported the notion that in Year One was all about work not play.

In summary, the main characteristics of Year One discourse were:

- Learners were perceived to be part of a group, not autonomous individuals.
- Reading, writing and maths mattered most.
- Work expectations were high.
- The adults exercised authority over children.

1.5 The research objectives

1. To critically analyse young children's perspectives of transition from the Reception to Year One within the context of power/knowledge relationships (*Research Question a and b*)
2. To critically analyse how children's experiences can be used to support new groups of children moving into Year One (*Research Question c and d*)
3. To use considerations of power and knowledge to analyse the theoretical and methodological links between children's participation in research, children's voice and children's perceptions of themselves as experts (*Research Questions b, d and e*)
4. To develop a framework for the participation of 'expert' children in Year One in researching and disseminating ways to support young children facing transition (*Research Question c and d*)

1.6 The research questions

- a. How do children recently transitioned to Year One perceive the ways in which power and knowledge relationships are constructed through the discourse and practices of Year One?
- b. How do the children transform themselves in relation to others through the knowledge produced within power relations, discourse and practices at the time of transition?
- c. How can those who have recently been involved in the transition from Reception to Year One use their recent experience of transition to help to bridge the gap for the next cohort of children?

- d. How can knowledge of the structure of the next stage of learning be used as a tool with which to begin to readdress power imbalances during transition?
- e. How does encouraging Year One children to use their expertise to help others impact on the experts?

1.7 Structure of Thesis

In Chapter Two (*Literature Review*), I review issues relating to early educational transitions and why they are important. I examine the role of play in early childhood education and critique the notion of ‘Developmentally Appropriate Practice’. I also review early education in England since the late 1980s and provide an overview of the current structure of early education in England.

In Chapter Three I review the work of prominent theorists in the field of transition and power. I also explore national and international research relating to power, structure, control, apprenticeship and brokerage.

In Chapter Four (*Methods and Methodology*), I examine the concept of ‘empowerment’ and the paradigm of participatory research. I also discuss in detail my ontological and epistemological positioning; my rationale for the research approach; the ethical principles of the research and the research design.

In Chapter Five (*Findings and Analysis*) I present and analyse findings relating to the children’s perspectives of their transition to Year One.

In Chapter Six (*Findings and Analysis*) I present and analyse how the children used their findings and experiences of transition to support new groups of children moving into Year One.

In Chapter Seven (*Findings and Analysis*) I present and analyse personal reflections on my own journey of transition from Reception to Year One in relation to the children's experiences and theoretical frameworks discussed.

In Chapter Eight (*Conclusion*) I highlight the methodological and theoretical implications of the study. I draw conclusions about how the study impacted on the children, myself, educational practice and future transitions. I also discuss the strengths and limitations of the study and my personal recommendations based on the findings

Chapter 2. Literature Review: Transition, Politics and Power (Transitions and early education in England)

In this chapter I present an overview of the literature review and outline of the literature review strategy. I discuss issues relating to early educational transitions and why they are important. I then examine the role of play in early childhood education, followed by a critique the notion of 'Developmentally Appropriate Practice'. This leads to an exploration of the transition from a play-based curriculum to a more formal approach, including some of the key issues associated with this move. After that I provide a summary of key educational developments ranging from the late 1980s to present day that have contributed to the issues. I conclude this chapter with an overview of the current structure of early education in England. Throughout the chapter, I make links between politics, power and the shifting landscape of early years provision and practice (Stephen 2010) within the context of transition in England.

2.1 Literature Review: Overview

My Literature Review is divided into two chapters:

In Chapter Two I review literature relating to early educational transitions, including the transition from play-based to formal learning and the issues that arise from this transition. I examine the role of play in early childhood education and critique the notion of 'Developmentally Appropriate Practice'. I also review developments that have occurred in early education in England since the late 1980s and provide an overview of the current structure of early education in England.

In Chapter Three I review the work of prominent theorists in the field of transition and power, making connections between their works and identifying common themes. I also review a range of national and international research relating to power, structure, control, apprenticeship and brokerage.

2.2 Literature Review Strategy

Table 2.1 provides an outline of the methodology I used for my literature review. The literature review process, however, remained flexible throughout this study, enabling me to respond to unplanned leads.

Main Data Bases/Search Engines explored	Main themes/theorists used	Type and number of sources reviewed
Google Scholar ERIC	Power Transition Early childhood education and care Power Knowledge Discourse Truth Foucault Giddens Gibson Bernstein Brofenbrenner	Peer reviewed journal articles (in excess of 600) Books (approximately 120) Online sources posted by reputable organisations (eg TACTYC, EECERA) (approximately 60) Policies, legislations and position statements (34) Conference presentations (25)
Time parameters set	Other factors which determined the direction of the literature review	Selection Criteria
Remained flexible in order to include the works of key theorists	Recommendations and guidance from supervisors and other professionals. Leads from readings and bibliographies	Relevance Reliability Credentials of author Contribution of the text to the development of the research area. Specific research area: Transition from play-based to formal curriculum/discontinuity Control over children's time and space Power relationships during transition Apprenticeship/Brokerage

Table 2.1 *Literature review methodology*

2.3 Transition

The Oxford English Dictionary defines transition as ‘the process in which something changes from one state to another’ (noun) and as the ‘action of moving gradually from one state or activity to another’ (verb) (Oxford Languages, 2019). Fabian and Dunlop (2002: 4) define educational transition as ‘the process of change of environment and set of relationships that children make from one setting or phase of education to another over time’.

Transitions of any kind present challenges for those involved (Brooker 2008). Even adults (with all their prior knowledge; life-experience and coping strategies) find transitions unsettling (Ecclestone, Biesta and Hughes 2009). For children, therefore, this feeling is likely to be considerably magnified (Bryce-Clegg 2017). Transition often includes a phase of concentrated learning and accelerated development in a social context (Ecclestone, Hayes, Biesta and Hughes 2009). When young children move settings, phase or year group or from one style of pedagogy to another their power status in relation to adults is diminished and they encounter shifts in identity and agency (Clark and Moss 2005; Ecclestone et al. 2009) (see glossary). During transition children are often expected to demonstrate increased levels of independence, responsibility and self-regulation (Dockett and Perry 2007). This automatically places intense demands on young children (Fabian and Dunlop 2005; Bryce-Clegg 2017).

Children react differently under the same conditions, depending on their level of resilience or capacity to negotiate diversity (Newman and Blackburn 2002). Some ‘children, like adults, enjoy and are stimulated by novelty and change’ (DES 1967: para. 427). According to Elder’s life-course theory, it is precisely these elements of uncertainty which make transition a critical life event (Elder 2001). These children may regard educational transition from one phase of education to the next as a

'rite of passage': a kind of border crossing or a route to becoming older, bigger and more able (Van Gennep 1960; Lam and Pollard 2006; Campbell Clark 2000; Gallacher and Cleary 2007). Other children can take longer to adapt to new situations and may find transition to be unsettling, difficult, worrying and stressful (Fisher 2010, Bryce-Clegg 2016).

The ability to manage change is influenced by a range of interrelating factors (Brooker 2008), including economic and social contexts; social and cultural biography and an individual's ability to shape their own destiny (Ecclestone et al. 2009). Some commentators have pointed out that children come across numerous discontinuities in their lives and should, therefore, learn to manage change (Fthenakis 1998). Page (2000) argues that children need to build up resilience to discontinuity and change with each transition they encounter. Brooker (2008) concurs that, in the context of our modern fast paced society, children need to acquire flexibility and resilience. During a period of adjustment, however, the potential for maximum attainment is considerably reduced (Bryce-Clegg 2017). If transition goes wrong, there can be long lasting and far reaching consequences, including social and emotion difficulties (Margetts 2002; Alexander, Entwisle and Kabbani 2001; Wildenger, McIntyre, Fiese and Eckert 2008; Bryce-Clegg 2017).

Teachers have a great impact on children's experience of transition (O'Kane 2013). They are a significant variable in efforts to improve educational processes (Lingard and Mills 2003), not least because they have immediate responsibility for the implementation of policy, pedagogic decision making and maintenance of professional, community and family relations (Petriwskj 2013). Teachers' practice, however, is influenced by a range of factors including policy, curriculum, practice guidance, initial and continuing professional development, personal beliefs and the values of the community of practice in which they work (Stephen 2010; Fitzgerald and Kay 2016; Crehen 2016). Rosaen and Schram (1998) suggest that

the perspectives and practices of others within a teacher's community of practice are a particularly powerful influence which can override past and present training and shape their own professional values and practice.

Success during early school transitions is considered to be a key factor in determining a child's future progress and development (Ghaye and Pascal 1989). There are, however, multiple perspectives of what constitutes a 'good transition', including those of children, parents, early years practitioners, settings, local authorities and governments (Guimaraes, Howe, Clausen and Cottle 2016).

The emphasis placed by successive governments and local authorities on early transitions suggests that successful transition is seen by those in power as 'cost-effective, contributing to the retention rate at primary school (HCC/EYAT 2011; Sanders, White Burge, Sharp, Eames, McEune and Grayson 2005; Fitzgerald and Kay 2016) and likely to reduce the need for later social and educational remediation' (Fabian and Dunlop 2007: 4). Performance and accountability practices can lead teachers to focus predominantly on progress and attainment as indicators of transition success (Einarsdóttir 2003).

Brooker's (2008) analysis of research evidence across a range of contexts, however, shows that children's perceptions of what makes a good transition are closely related to their need for:

- A positive sense of identity and worth (achieved through reassuring and supportive interactions and recognition of their achievements)
- Familiar and trusted adults, friends and peers close at hand
- A knowledge and understanding of the rules and routines of their new environment

- Opportunities to make their own choices, control the direction of their own learning and participate in decision making
- Access to an indoor and outdoor learning environment where they can explore their own ideas and interests.
- Opportunities to participate in energetic physical movement

If children's needs are not met, they can feel outside of their comfort zone and thus take a long time to adjust to the significant changes they experience as a result of transition (Brooker 2008). Children whose needs are met feel a sense of well-being which reduces anxiety, increases self-confidence and stimulates greater levels of involvement (Guimaraes et al. 2016).

Bryce-Clegg (2017) believes that children's self-confidence and levels of anxiety are the greatest inhibitors to attainment in schools. If a child's levels of wellbeing and involvement are low their potential for achievement and progress is also low (Einarsdóttir 2003, Guimaraes et al. 2016). Emotional wellbeing during transition is therefore key to children's potential attainment (Brooker 2008: Bryce-Clegg 2017: Guimaraes, Howe, Clausen and Cottle 2016).

Bryce-Clegg (2017) uses the Leuven scales of wellbeing (relating to children's self-confidence, resilience and self-esteem) and involvement (relating to their levels of engagement, interest and depth of learning) (Laevers 2002) to monitor the effectiveness of transitions. One of the findings of his research was that 'high quality familiarity.....significantly reduced children's conscious and subconscious anxiety' (ibid 2017: 7). Ofsted (2004) also supports the notion that strong relationships promote children's wellbeing. This suggests the importance of transition programs that link schools, families, and communities in positive and supportive relationships and pre-planned transition strategies, such as

opportunities for children to visit their new classroom and spend time with the adults (Einarsdottir, 2003).

Meeting the individual needs of the children is also key (ibid). This affirms the need for initial and on-going assessment (ibid). Continuity is another significant factor in successful transitions (Fabian, 2000; Margetts, 2002; Ramey and Ramey, 1999). Transition strategies designed to overcome discontinuities and prepare children for the challenges and demands of the next stage of learning can help (ibid). The most effective transitions programs, however, are likely to be those that establish continuity, for example continuity in curricula, expectations and pedagogy (ibid).

Nevertheless, it is widely accepted that most children's ability to settle into a new environment or stage of schooling is improved when transition is made a priority (Digweed 2008). One of the main recommendations from the National Foundation for Education Research (Sanders et al. 2005) report is that transition should be viewed as a process rather than an event (ibid).

2.4 Transition from Reception to Year One

For many years concerns have been focused on the transition from pre-school to school (Brooker 2008). The move from pre-school or home to school is traditionally seen as one of the biggest challenges for young children and early transitions are usually carefully planned and managed (Fabian 2002). Understandably the physical change of environment which children experience when they transit from pre-school to Reception represents a multitude of challenges and changes for these young children (ibid). The curriculum on either side of pre-school to Reception transition, however, remains the same, thus providing some continuity for children

involved (Brooker 2008). It could be argued, therefore, that this transition is less challenging than subsequent transitions 'within the system' which are often less well supported (Brooker 2008: 74). A preoccupation with the transition from pre-school to school can overshadow another transition milestone which occurs very shortly after (ibid).

The transition from Reception to Year One has been foregrounded recently (Ofsted 2017) (see p.58). Bryce-Clegg asserts that a 'good transition into Year One can have a massive impact on children's wellbeing and therefore on their progress' (Bryce-Clegg 2017: 2). When children transit from Reception to Year One they are only five or six weeks older than when they left Reception (ibid). They are also likely to be going through a period of readjustment to school after the long summer holiday and very often experiencing a change of environment, teacher, routines and learning expectations (ibid). Adding to the challenges children face at this time, the transit from Reception to Year One traditionally involves an abrupt change from play based curriculum to more formal approaches to learning (Fisher 2010; OCC 2006, 2009; Bryce- Clegg 2017). The very fact that two year groups fall within different bands of education ('Early years and 'Key Stage One') and follow different programmes of study ('Early Years Foundation Stage' and 'National Curriculum') serves to highlight the rift between year groups (Fisher 2010, Bryce-Clegg 2017).

The culture of Year One classrooms is often very different from Foundation Stage classrooms (Brooker 2002; Dockett and Perry 2007). Not only do the educational philosophy, teaching style and structure of education vary considerably, so too do the expectations placed upon children (Fabian and Dunlop 2007). Young children who are used to learning which is embedded in context and play, are suddenly expected to apply their thinking to the abstract or unfamiliar (Donaldson 1978; Bryce-Clegg 2017). This means having to learn the social rules and values of a new

community, as well as coming to terms with changes in identity, roles and relationships (Griebel and Niesel 2000). The transition from Reception to Year One, therefore, can be particularly disempowering for the young children concerned (Bryce-Clegg 2017).

2.5 Play

A child's right to play is formally protected within Article 31 of the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UNCRC 1989), which explicitly acknowledges the child's right to engage in play that is appropriate to their age, and clarified in *General Comment No. 17* which states:

While play is often considered non-essential, the committee reaffirms that it is a fundamental and vital dimension of the pleasure of childhood, as well as an essential component of physical, social, cognitive, emotional and spiritual development
(UNCRC 2013: 6)

Internationally there is consensus that very young children (like most people) learn more effectively through playing and talking (QCA/DfEE 2000: 20) and active, play based pedagogy is important (Bertram and Pascal 2002; Crehen 2016). Play was acknowledged as an integral part of Developmentally Appropriate Practice in its original version (Copple and Bredekamp 1987) and reaffirmed in the revised addition which stated that 'play needs to be a significant part of the young child's day – and part of a developmentally appropriate classroom' (Copple and Bredekamp 2009: 328). Although the Developmentally Appropriate Practice focuses mainly on the cognitive aspects of play, it also recognises the benefits of play for social, emotional and physical development (Bredekamp 1987).

In England the *Practice Guidance for the Early Years Foundation Stage* regulates

provision for all children up to the age of five. It states:

play underpins all development and learning for young children....and it is through play that they develop intellectually, creatively, physically, socially and emotionally' (DfES 2007: 7).

The importance of play, however, is not always recognised in school (Robinson 2015). Structured curriculum goals in national policy frameworks are increasingly seen to compete with play-based approaches, resulting in a polarisation that has been characterised by the terms 'played based' and 'formal' learning (Walsh, Sproule, McGuinness and Trew 2011). Table 2.2 exemplifies some of the opposing concepts which have become associated with these two pedagogical approaches.

Concepts that have become associated with 'played based' learning	Concepts that have become associated with 'formal' learning
interactive, practical, enjoyable, integrated child-led, experiential (learning from experience), concerned with the whole child, active, voluntary, flexible, prolonged engagement, seen principally to serve a social function, contemporary	theoretical, detached, segregated, compartmentalised, adult-led, objective driven, structured, direct instruction, prescriptive, routine and timetable driven, focusing on 'academic' achievement rather than the whole child, actual instruction of subject knowledge, unnegotiable, inflexible didactic, sitting still and listening, fast paced, traditional

Table 2.2 Opposing concepts of 'play based' and 'formal' learning (Bryce-Clegg 2017, Fisher 2010, Robinson 2015, Brooker 2008)

Early childhood education frequently perceives play to be a practice initiated by children, while learning is seen as a result of a practice of activity initiated by adults (ibid). Play based and formal learning are often differentiated as direct instruction versus free play (Wood and Atfield 2005).

Walsh, Sproule, McGuinness and Trew (2011) suggest that it is when work and play

are perceived as being two separate, or even opposing, entities that it becomes difficult to recognise how and when the transition between play and formal learning should take place. One of the reasons given for this is that play is notoriously difficult to define (Moyles 1994; Wood and Atfield 2005; Johnson, Christie and Yawkey 2005; Zosh, Hirsh-Pasek, Hopkins, Jensen, Liu, Neale, Solis and Whitebread 2018). Conceptualisations of play differ according to the context and individual perspectives, hence, there is no reliable criteria by which to define play (ibid). From a child's perspective play and learning are not always separate (Pramling Samuelsson and Carlsson 2008). Within the discourse and affordances of school, however, play and learning are traditionally disconnected, for example, by designated work times and play times (Bryce-Clegg 2017).

In reality, the debate is far more complex and ambiguous (Wood 2014; Van Oers and Duijkers 2013). Pyle and Danniels (2017) discuss a range of play based strategies including child directed play, collaboratively created play and teacher directed play, all of which provide opportunities for personal, social and academic development. This continuum represents a broader approach to play based learning which counters other more restricting views and leads the way to:

a more sustainable pedagogy.....that does not separate play from learning but draws on the similarities in character in order to promote creativity in future generations (Pramling Samuelsson and Carlsson 2008: 638)

Zosh et al. (2018: 2) conceptualise play as an 'unfolding spectrum or continuum' (figure 2.1) ranging from free play (in which adults do not guide or scaffold, and in which there is no predetermined goal) to guided play (where an adult helps to structure the activity, and the activity is centred around a specific learning goal). This model provides a more nuanced understanding of play, that allows for an integration of practices and greater flexibility when applied to early years education (Pyle, DeLuca and Danniels 2017). In this model different types of play

are perceived as complementary rather than incompatible (ibid, 317) and play and learning harmonise rather than clash. In particular, the inclusion of guided play in Zosh et al.'s model broadens the range of subject areas and contexts where play might have a positive impact on learning.



Figure 2.1 Play conceptualized as a spectrum captures playful experiences that differ along a continuum in terms of initiation and direction of the experience and whether or not there is a learning goal (Zosh et al. 2018: 2)

Anning (1991: 30) points out that play is often used at a 'slogan-like level' by early childhood educators. The central positioning of play within early childhood education, however, is not without its critics (Pellegrini and Boyd 1993; Ailwood 2003). Bennett et al. (1997), for example, asserts that the rhetoric of play is not always reflected in practice. Anning (1991) and Bennett et al. (1997) argue that there is little empirical evidence to support the pedagogical value of play in early childhood education. Ailwood (2003: 291) found play in some early childhood settings to be repetitive, isolating and 'recreational rather than educational'. Strandell (2000) suggests that play is often trivialised to the extent that it contributes to the separation of children from adults, thereby, reinforcing power differentials.

Kuschner (2012) draws attention to statements contained in the most recent addition of *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Education Programs Serving Children From Birth Through Age 8* (Bredekamp and Copple 2009) which specifically prioritise some types of play over others, implying that they are more effective in supporting children's development and learning. For example, the document states:

Mature dramatic play.....contributes significantly to children's self-regulation, while simply manipulating play objects in the dramatic area.....does not promote self-regulation skills (Copple and Bredekamp 2009: 47)

Some discourses of play have become established as 'technologies of governmentality' (Ailwood 2003) (see below).

2.6 Developmentally Appropriate Practice

The position statement: *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Education Programs Serving Children From Birth Through Age 8* (Bredekamp and Copple 1987) was a product of the largest institutional representative of early childhood education in the USA: The National Association of Education for Young Children (NAEYC). The document's original intention was to guide early childhood education accreditation processes in the U.S.A and counter the movement toward an academic curriculum in pre-school and kindergarten classrooms (Bredekamp and Copple 1997). 'When a professional organisation takes a stand regarding excellence in education (however), the resulting document will embody the values of its writers, or in a larger sense, the values of the culture(s) that influence those writers' (Williams 1994: 156). The DAP used Euro-American perspectives of what children should know and do and how adults should work with children to justify child-centered practices (Jipson 1991, 1998).

Based on cognitive development theory (Kessler 1991), the discourse of the first addition of *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Education Programs Serving Children From Birth Through Age 8* (DAP) (Bredekamp and Copple 1987) promoted a narrow approach to early childhood education which

did not allow for individuals and failed to acknowledge cultural diversity (Kessler and Swadener 1992; Dahlberg, Moss and Pence 2004; Canella, Swadener and Che, 2007; Cannella, 1997). The 'exclusively developmental lens' (Cohen 2008: 11) of the DAP negated the complex ways in which children learn within nested systems and overlooked 'the rich possibilities for understanding the ways in which identity is socially constructed in relation to organising features such as gender, class, race and ethnicity' (Alloway 1997:2). Thus, it was potentially marginalising for some children (Cohen 2008; Alloway 1997) and at odds with the principles now recognised in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Using emotive terms such as 'shared vision' and 'core values' the DAP provided a prescribed code of conduct for early childhood educators, discouraging diversity and alternative ways of doing things, in an attempt to achieve consensus (Cohen 2008). However, the notion of developmentally appropriate practice soon became accepted as an 'authoritative truth' by the international field of early childhood education (Cohen 2008:7), creating a shared language between early childhood educators (MacNaughton 2005), sidelining alternative discourses, exercising power over the early childhood community worldwide (Cohen 2008) and supporting a 'disciplinary regime where power became anonymous and functional' (Foucault 1995: 193). In short, it epitomized the way in which discourses systematise (Foucault 1972) and frame how we 'think, feel, understand and practice in specific areas of our lives' (MacNaughton 2005: 20).

Faced with criticism, and in an attempt to differentiate child development and learning, the DAP was revised in 1997 (Bredekamp and Copple 1997). This new document highlighted the importance of 'culture, family, context-relevant curriculum and authentic assessment' (Cohen 2008: 9). According to Lubeck (1991), however, its 'common norms remained unchanged and unchallenged and

it continued to be widely used as a reflection of how the curriculum should work (286).

Understandings of play-based pedagogy and the concept of Developmentally Appropriate Practice are under constant review, informed both by new theoretical insights (e.g., from socio-cultural theory), from empirical research, and from practitioners' experiences as they seek to implement these practices on a larger scale.

2.7 A Short History of Early Childhood Education in England (1988 - 2018)

The National Curriculum for England and Wales (DfE 1988) was established in 1988 and its implementation continued into the mid-1990s. The curriculum sets out the stages and core subjects that children should be taught during their time at school and the knowledge and skills that are important for children to become successful and confident learners (ibid). It is divided into subject areas such as Maths, English and Science for which there are prescribed programmes of study. It sets out achievement targets in each subject, which teachers can use to measure each child's progress and to plan next steps in their learning (ibid). The four main purposes of the National Curriculum have been summarised thus: to establish entitlement; to establish standards; to promote public understanding and to promote continuity and coherence (Fitzgerald and Kay 2016).

The introduction of the English Primary National Curriculum in 1989 (DfE 1989), together with its national assessment requirements, preceded a period of immense change in the English education system which impacted on the youngest children (Fitzgerald and Kay 2016). In 1989, the then Minister of State for

Education, Angela Rumbold, initiated an inquiry into the quality of educational experiences offered to three and four-year-olds in England. Her instructions were to focus on the continuity of education. The inquiry's final report (DES 1990) recommended particular requirements for the under-fives, although it also stressed that the formality of the National Curriculum created difficulties for the move to compulsory schooling.

In the wake of the *Rumbold Report*, and in response to a growing awareness that tackling social inequality would require a more systematic approach to the care and welfare of the youngest children (United Nations 1989, DES 1989), the Conservative Government, in their final year of office (DfEE 1996), introduced a voucher scheme that entitled all four-year-olds to a free nursery place. This proved controversial as a fall in the birth rate meant that many schools had spare capacity in their first year of compulsory schooling and consequently encouraged parents to use their vouchers to send their four-year-olds to school (Fitzgerald and Kay 2016). The pedagogy and conditions for four-year-olds in school, however, were often very different to their previous experiences (Brooker 2016). In research carried out for the National Foundation for Educational Research, Cleave and Brown (1991) expressed concern about the lack of space, lack of access to outdoor play, lack of classroom assistant support for teachers, inappropriate teaching methods and curriculum provision for many four-year-olds in schools. Bennett and Kell (1989) also reported grave concerns about the poor quality of learning experiences offered to four-year-olds in Reception classes they studied. Although the voucher system was abandoned by the incoming Labour Government, its brief implementation resulted in most schools setting up a 'Reception' class, without any clear guidance on how to cater for the needs of four-year-olds (Fitzgerald and Kay 2016).

The Primary National Curriculum impacted on Reception as well as older children

as primary and infant schools were obliged to demonstrate 'value added' at age seven via Standard Assessment tests or SATs (Aubrey 2004). In 1996 concerns about the poor level of pupil performance in Key Stage tests prompted the addition to the National Curriculum of two parallel support projects (ibid). The National Literacy (DfEE 1998) and National Numeracy (DfEE1999) strategies also played a part in establishing a high stakes culture of 'performativity' (Bruce 1991, Fisher 2008, Roberts Holmes 2014). These strategies were funded by consecutive Labour and Conservative governments. Their principle aim was to improve the teaching of literacy and numeracy in primary schools and raise standards; and although non-statutory, schools were scrutinised for evidence of their implementation during OfSTED inspections (Fitzgerald and Kay 2016).

The strategies included guidance on curriculum content, as well as prescribed methods of delivery. Hence, for the first time in the UK, Governments asserted control over classroom pedagogy as well as content and disseminated clear messages about what mattered in education (Anning 2015). As a consequence timetables in school became weighted heavily in favour of Literacy and Maths; other subjects became side lined and teachers were forced to adapt their teaching to a didactic style of pedagogy characterised by whole class teaching, limited small group work and infrequent opportunities to play (Anning 2015).

It could be argued that the national strategies led to a catastrophic narrowing of the curriculum. The National Literacy Strategy, for example, focused almost exclusively on reading and writing. Definitions of 'literacy' are ambiguous (Cambridge Assessment 2013). The National Literacy Trust (2015) suggests that the term 'literacy' encompasses reading, writing, speaking and listening. The original National Literacy Strategy material (DfEE 1998: 6), however, answered its own question of 'what is literacy?' with 'Literacy unites the important skills of reading and writing'. Apart from a brief acknowledgement that speaking and

listening are important, the rest of the materials focused exclusively on reading and writing. This encouraged schools to negate speaking and listening in favour of equally constricted interpretations of literacy and a curriculum which concentrated upon the teaching and learning of reading and writing (Anning 2015). From the Government's perspective this positioning did not officially change until the inception of the new Primary National Strategy (DfES 2006), in which speaking and listening featured more prominently under the heading of literacy.

In 2009, the New Labour Government announced that they planned to disband the National Strategies with the intention of handing back control to schools and local authorities (Fitzgerald and Kay 2016). In doing so the Government claimed that the strategies' relentless focus on the reading, writing and maths coupled with record investment and rapid intervention, had led to the highest ever school standards and had made a real impact on teaching and learning (ibid). Teachers, headteachers, local authorities and Ofsted, however, held a different view, protesting that the strategies had failed to deliver what they had promised and had become a burden on schools (Fitzgerald and Kay 2016). It is argued that underlying tensions created by the long-lasting effects of these government initiatives remained and some teachers continued to practice within a constricted framework (Roberts-Homes 2014; Moyles, 2015; Robinson 2015).

The impact of the National Curriculum and National Strategies for Reception aged children led to a substantial debate about what appropriate practice should look like in Reception classes and prompted some practitioners to campaign for a new curriculum that would be more compatible with the needs of the youngest children (Wood 2014, Bingham and Whitebread 2014). One decade after the implementation of the National Strategies the Labour government announced their intention to introduce a new and 'distinctive educational phase' (Rogers 2010: 8). Their aim was to separate education for children aged between birth

and five years from the Primary National Curriculum and provide a more appropriate curriculum that was deeply embedded in a philosophy of child-centred, play based and experiential learning. Consequently, the move was enthusiastically embraced by the early years community (Roberts-Holmes 2014).

In May 2000 the Department of Education and Skills in England published *Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage* (DfEE/QCA 2000). This document set out six areas of learning which formed the basis of the English foundation stage curriculum. These areas were:

- Personal, social and emotional development
- Communication, language and literacy
- Mathematical development
- Knowledge and understanding of the world
- Physical development
- Creative development

Each area of learning had a set of related early learning goals. The curriculum guidance was intended to help practitioners plan to meet the diverse needs of all children so that most would achieve and some, where appropriate, go beyond the early learning goals by the end of the foundation stage (ibid). The *Early Years Foundation Stage* (DfES 2002) was made statutory in 2008.

The principle of meeting the diverse needs of each individual child lies at the heart of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), which acknowledges that children learn and develop at different rates and in different ways (DCSF 2008). Its original aim was to help children achieve five outcomes from the, now abandoned, Every

Child Matters (DCSF 2003: 9) document. These were staying safe; being healthy; enjoying and achieving; making a positive contribution and achieving economic well-being. Consequently, it established an expectation that practitioners would deliver personalised learning that promoted care and development (Fitzgerald and Kay 2016). In contrast to the National Curriculum, there is a strong emphasis on play based learning in the EYFS, which is substantially child initiated and facilitated or supported (rather than directed or led) by adults (Brooker 2008).

Almost every child, in almost every location, will encounter at some point the irreversible change from informal to formal learning that characterises most educational systems (Brooker 2008). The age at which children are expected to transit from play based learning to more formal learning, however, differs from country to country (Crehen 2017). In some countries, children start formal schooling up to two years later than in England. Stipek (2002) found some international evidence that children from challenging backgrounds progress quicker if entry is not delayed. Fisher (2010), however, points out that, in general, children in countries where the transition into formal schooling is delayed outperform their English peers by the age of eleven. This is backed up by Crehen's (2016) in depth analysis of practice within some of the 'top-performing' educational systems of the world (Finland, Japan, Singapore, Shanghai and Canada). Broadman (2006) also found that later school entry in Australia was particularly supportive for boys. The evidence suggests that, although children who start formal learning early sometimes outperform their later-starting peers in the first few years of schooling, this advantage disappears (Kavkler, Tancig, Magajna and Aubrey 2000), and even sometimes reverses (Marcon 2002), by the time children reach their late primary years.

In most European countries the transition from a play-based curriculum to a more formal curriculum happens around the age of six when children commence school

(Brooker 2008). In England, children usually start school during the academic year (1 September to 31 August) within which they become five years old and do not transit to formal schooling until the year afterwards (ibid). White and Sharp (2007) explore this misalignment from two perspectives. On one hand, it could be argued that this makes transition to school less difficult because pre-school and the first year of school (Reception) follow the same curriculum and, therefore, children do not need to adapt to a new setting and a new curriculum at the same time (ibid). On the other hand, it could be contested that there is a danger that the transition from play based to formal learning, one year later, is not sufficiently recognised (ibid). The debate, however, is less about starting ages than the nature and appropriateness of the provision on either side of the line between play based and formal learning, wherever it is drawn (Alexander 2009).

At face value, the main differences between the National Curriculum and the Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum are that the former is more compartmentalised, prescriptive and formal, whilst the latter is much more flexible and integrated (ibid). Quick, Lambley, Newcombe and Aubrey (2002) draw attention to the difficulties teachers experience when trying to link the two curricula. In response to growing concerns about this discontinuity between the two stages and the subsequent impact upon the quality of transition from Reception to Year One, Ofsted (2004) produced a report that began to explore some of the fundamental issues. The report suggested that inconsistencies between Foundation Stage pedagogy and the more formal Year 1 curriculum may be hindering smooth transitions for some children. and (perhaps more importantly) the abruptness of some transition programmes. It recommended that the learning experiences provided in Year One should build upon the 'practical approaches and structured play' of the Reception year (Ofsted 2004: 3). It also encouraged teachers to use Foundation Stage assessment data when planning Year One children's next steps learning (ibid).

Shortly after, and apparently reiterating concerns, HMI (in conjunction with Sure Start) commissioned the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) to carry out another report (Sanders, White, Burge, Sharp, Eames, McEune and Grayson 2005). Once again, this report identified the move from play based learning to a more structured curriculum as one of the main challenges. Worryingly, it also highlighted a host of factors that concerned children about the transition to Year One, for example: loss of opportunities to learn through play; increased workload; pressure to write and 'carpet time' expectations such as sitting still and listening for extended periods of time. It was, therefore, unsurprising that many of the children included in the study expressed some regret at what they had left behind in the Foundation Stage (ibid).

In order to address the concerns raised by these two reports and to support schools in improving their Reception to Year One transition programmes, the National Assessment Agency published a guidance document: 'Continuing the Learning Journey' (NAA 2005). The main recommendation of this resource was that schools should 'promote continuity of learning' by ensuring that 'key features of early years practice' were carried into Year One. According to Fisher (2010) however, the uplifting messages conveyed by this document continued to be overshadowed by the national strategies and Ofsted's preoccupation with their status. This resulted in conflicting pedagogy and practice.

Four substantial reviews of early years and primary education in England followed. On the matter of transition, there was a general concurrence from the *Rose Review* (Rose 2006); the *Cambridge Review* (Alexander 2010a) and the *Tickell Review* (Tickell 2012) that discontinuity between the Foundation Stage and Key Stage One was cause for concern. The *Nutbrown Review* (Nutbrown 2012) agreed that the Year One curriculum should be positioned closer to the early years

curriculum. In their critique of the government White Paper *The Importance of Teaching* (DfE 2010), however, Lumby (2014: 528) cautions us to be apprehensive of political rhetoric that implies a commitment to educational change as it often ‘conceals fundamental continuity’. Policy makers often assert their power to ensure that their interpretations of a review are the only heard interpretations (ibid). Clark (2017), for example, suggests that the climate in English education changed significantly in relation to academic freedom and pedagogy following the Rose Review leading to a decline in teachers’ professional judgement and autonomy.

The Year One *Phonics Screening Check* (DfE 2017) is an example of the way in which powerful interpretations of a review have influenced practice ([see p.308](#)). The test was introduced by the Coalition Government in 2012 on the basis of the strong research evidence base in favour of synthetic phonics that had been presented in the Rose Review (ibid). Every Year One child in England is currently required to sit the statutory Phonics Screening Check during the Summer Term of Year One. Children who do not pass the test on their first attempt are required to sit it again at the end of Year Two. Only children who pass the test can be assessed as having achieved the ‘expected level of attainment’ in reading for Year One. Phonics Check results are reported nationally in the form of a percentage. Despite little evidence to support the effectiveness of the test (Clark 2017), teachers are consequently subjected to the performativity demands of securing a Phonics Check pass for every child in their class and ‘teaching to the test’ is common practice.

The value of a Year One Phonics Screening Check is, however, contentious (Roberts-Holmes 2014, Clark 2017). Fifty percent of the forty words in the check are pseudo words, often referred to as ‘alien’ words. Children, therefore, need to be competent at decoding to read them. The rationale for including alien words in

the test is that, as children's ability to read develops, they increasingly encounter new words that they cannot make sense of (Gibson and England 2015). Being able to decode alien words prepares them for this stage in their reading.

The intention of teaching children synthetic phonics is to empower them with a tool that will support them in the empowering skill of reading. Children, however, draw on a range of strategies to read and not all children favour decoding as their preferred method (Wyse and Styles 2007). Children who prefer other strategies (for example the sight reading of whole words) often find alien words difficult because their instinct is to try to make sense of the word (Clark 2017). This places some children at a disadvantage in the Screening Check (ibid). An over emphasis on the teaching of synthetic phonics negates teachers' professional judgements and treats all emerging readers as the same rather than recognising their individual skills and needs. It also narrows young children's reading experiences from the broad range of rich literature they should be enjoying to the 'conformity of unimaginative' synthetic phonics books (Clark 2017: 5).

At the very least, it is not difficult to see why some commentators blame successive government initiatives for the discontinuities that children encounter as they transit from Reception to Year One (Fisher 2010). Given the performativity-related, downward pressures of the National Curriculum, National Strategies, Phonics Screening (see p.226), Ofsted, head teachers, parents, Year Two teachers and other agencies, it is little wonder that many Year One teachers feel obliged to commence a formal approach to teaching as soon as children reach Key Stage One (Jeffrey and Woods 1998; Robert-Holmes 2014). Moyles (2015: 22) however, reminds teachers that they have a responsibility to afford the children in their care with the best possible provision. Despite the confines of government, regional and school policy, they also have a moral duty to 'question their own actions on behalf of children' (ibid). Indeed, Fisher (2009) queries how it is possible that a Year One child is expected to perform within such a prescriptive

and un-tailored approach when only weeks before they have been 'supported individually to make progress at their own pace' within the EYFS (DCSF 2008, para. 1: 13). If some children are being propelled into formalised learning long before they are 'ready' to learn in this manner, it is hardly surprising that the transit from Reception to Year One can be problematic for some children (Bryce-Clegg 2017).

The debate, however, is not clear-cut. For over a decade now, some commentators have argued that, contrary to the recommendations of the EYFS, the provision for play in Reception classrooms is also being marginalised by the numerous legislations, initiatives and goals of primary schooling (Ball 1998; Aubrey 2004; Osgood 2006; Rogers and Evans 2007). Aubrey (2004), for example, highlights the often-competing discourses of school improvement plans and early years' pedagogy resulting from such downward pressures. In concurrence, this is backed by empirical research which shows that play based pedagogy is not always apparent in Reception classrooms (Rogers et al. 2007). Adams, Alexander, Drummond and Moyles (2004) also illustrate an openly formal approach to the teaching of literacy and numeracy within some reception classes, which is more representative of primary school than early years pedagogy. The problem is that Reception teachers are under pressure to ensure that the maximum number of children achieve what the Department of Education considers to be a 'good level of development' by the end of their Reception year (DfE 2015). This can sometimes lead practitioners to change their pedagogy to a more formal, structured, adult led approach or even 'intense periods of coaching' during the summer term (Bryce-Clegg 2017: 11). Moss (2012: 8) refers to this process and its associated discourses as 'schoolification'.

Rather than being totally at odds with the National Curriculum and Key Stage One, it appears that early years education in the UK is becoming increasingly formalised as early years teachers are drawn more and more into the wider school

performativity culture (Roberts-Holmes 2014; Singh 2015). Propelling children into a developmentally inappropriate learning environment, in order to accelerate their progress, however, is often counter-productive (Crehen 2016). In order to explore how this issue has possibly intensified in more recent years, it is necessary to look closer at significant shifts in Government policy since the inception of the EYFS in 2008 and, more predominantly, since 2010.

Children's progress through the Foundation Stage is assessed against a broad range of Early Learning Goals (QCA/DfEE 2017). Reception class teachers make 'observational assessments' throughout the reception year and in the summer term, when the children have turned five years old, grade children according to criteria set out in the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (ibid). This information is based on Reception teachers' 'best fit' judgements within prescribed criteria (Roberts-Holmes 2014). On the surface this appears to signify a trust in teachers' professional judgement. According to Bradbury (2013), however, the power that is handed out to teachers is systematically undermined by Local Authorities who moderate the accuracy of teachers' professional judgements and have the ultimate power to 'deprofessionalise' them by endorsing or disputing their decisions.

In the initial version of the EYFSP (DfE 2008), teachers assessed children against 117 points. These points encompassed a holistic view of children's overall development and reflected child centred principles (Roberts-Holmes 2014). The election of the Conservative-Liberal Democrat UK Coalition Government in 2010, however, led to a realignment of the profile which prioritised specific areas of learning over others and placed an emphasis on 'essential knowledge and concepts' (DfE 2010). The areas of priority included English Language, Literature, Maths and Science. The Government's positioning, which led to this move, was clearly exposed within the revised EYFS that states that 'The Government believes that a good foundation in mathematics and literacy is crucial for later success,

particularly in terms of readiness for school' (DfE, 2011: 1).

The concept of 'school readiness' is a global issue driven by financial and economic agendas (Gunnarsdottir 2014; Pianta, Cox and Snow 2007). The ever-increasing trend towards school readiness negates perceptions of the child as *being* in favour of a perception of the children as a *becoming* (Uprichard 2008). Gunnarsdottir (2014) reports that even some Nordic early years practitioners, with their tradition of play based pedagogy, are beginning to feel under pressure to produce 'school-ready' children via more formalised teaching methods. The pressure to provide children who are 'ready' for the next stage of learning often leads to the process of 'schoolification' (Moss 2007; Dahlberg and Moss 2005). An obvious symptom of schoolification in the early years is when learning through play is 'no longer considered to be an appropriate route to knowledge acquisition' (Gunnarsdottir 2014: 246). Deviation from the high-profile rhetoric of play (that had so characterised the original EYFS) is overtly framed in the context of a fiercely competitive 'global race' for economic success which begins with 'readying' children for school and eventual employment (DfE 2013: 5; Singh 2015).

Following the recommendations of the Tickell Review (2012), the government introduced a revised EYFS framework in September 2012 (DfE 2012). This document identified three prime areas of learning which the government considered to be most essential for children's readiness for future learning and healthy development (DfE 2012) and four specific areas of learning which it considered to be essential for teaching children about the world in which they live and for helping them to gain the knowledge and skills they need to be successful in a school environment (Table 2.3)

Area of Learning and Development	Aspect
Prime Areas	
Personal, Social and Emotional Development	Making relationships
	Self-confidence and self-awareness
	Managing feelings and behaviour
Physical Development	Moving and handling
	Health and self-care
Communication and Language	Listening and attention
	Understanding
	Speaking
Specific areas	
Literacy	Reading
	Writing
Mathematics	Numbers
	Shape, space and measure
Understanding the World	People and communities
	The world
	Technology
Expressive Arts and Design	Exploring and using media and materials
	Being imaginative

Table 2.3 *Prime and Specific Areas of Learning and Development (DfE 2012)*

The number of early learning goals that EYFS teachers were required to make judgements against were reduced from 117 to 17 goals in the revised framework. Class teachers were required to judge whether children were ‘emerging’, ‘expected’ or ‘exceeding’ in every area of development and children were only deemed to have reached a ‘good level of development’ (GLD) if they achieved an ‘expected’ level in all areas. The revised framework also made it clear that practitioners were responsible for ongoing judgements about the balance between play and teaching, between activities led by children and activities led or guided by adults (DfE 2012). Following a similar trend, a further revision to the EYFSP in 2014 (DfE 2014) ‘substantially raised the thresholds’ (Robert-Holmes 2014) for Literacy and Maths, thus effectively changing the goal posts and making them harder to achieve.

Given the increased demands in the areas of Maths and English, therefore, it is perhaps unsurprising that National statistical data based on the Foundation Stage Profile (DfE 2015) shows that only 66.3% of all children enter Year One having

achieved all of the Early Learning Goals. It is no doubt in light of such evidence that Lingard, Martino and Rezai-Rashti (2013: 552) conclude that the current early years assessment procedure 'denies the impact of structural inequality and lays responsibility for performance at the feet of teachers and individual schools'.

According to Lingard, Martino and Rezi-Rashti (2013: 514) the revised early years assessment arrangements are an exemplification of how early years pedagogy is being steered, 'from a distance', towards greater formality. There are signs that this downward pressure is in fact on the increase (Moss 2012). In September 2014 a new National Curriculum (DfE 2014) was also introduced. This new curriculum places an emphasis on traditional subject-based learning. It specifies required subject knowledge for each year group, which includes spelling lists and prescribed phonics detail. Year One teachers, faced with the added pressures of summative assessment in the form of the Phonics Screening Check ([see p.308](#)) and an overwhelming increase in what needs to be taught in Year One, have begun to look towards Reception class teachers for help with the coverage of the curriculum (Moss 2012). Hence, Reception teachers are obliged to prepare their children for the rapid pace of primary school (ibid).

The recently published Ofsted report *Bold Beginnings: The Reception curriculum in a sample of good and outstanding primary schools* (Ofsted 2017) identifies characteristics of Reception practice in the 'strongest performing schools' (ibid: 4) but does little to alleviate the pressures on teachers and children. In the context of transition, the report implies that the increased expectations of the new National Curriculum compel a realignment of the early learning goals. It also recommends that Reception classes should:

devote sufficient time each day to the direct teaching of reading, writing and mathematics including frequent opportunities for children to practise and consolidate their skills (Ofsted 2017: 7)

and 'make sure that the teaching of reading, including systematic synthetic

phonics, is the core purpose of the Reception Year' (ibid).

The TACTYC response (TACTYC 2017: 1) draws on a strong evidence base of research to counter several of the recommendations made by Ofsted. It also claims that the report exposes Ofsted's 'underlying agenda of downward pressure' (TACTYC 2017: 6) and bias towards a formal approach to teaching and learning. According to TACTYC, this latest Ofsted report is:

likely to play a powerful role in distorting the balance of the curriculum, early years teaching and young children's learning and development in their first at school (TACTYC 2017: 1)

This assumption was confirmed by an article that appeared on the TES website in June 2018 (O'Brien 2018). The article outlines the actions that one teacher (the author) is taking in order to make the transition from Reception to Year One easier for children in his school. The teacher's response includes the development of a spiral curriculum which encompasses some of the Year One National Curriculum learning objectives and promotes direct whole class and guided group teaching via PowerPoint presentations in Reception.

Reactions of this nature prompt those who are committed to a child centered early years pedagogy (for example the Education Endowment Foundation 2018) to produce their own recommendations relating to how *Bold Beginnings* should be interpreted in the classroom. These provide a more measured response which takes into consideration young children's developmental stages and focuses on broader aspects of children's holistic development, for example language and communication, which underpin their future development in reading, writing and mathematics.

At the time of writing this thesis, the early years community is cautiously awaiting another reworking of the EYFS by the current Conservative Government (DfE

2018). New early learning goals have recently been devised and will be piloted in some English schools from September 2018 (DfE 2018a, 2018b).

2.8 The Current Structure of Education in England

Early childhood education in England is located within a fragmented education system (Bryce-Clegg 2017: 1). Children can be educated in state schools (which are funded by government and are free for all pupils), independent schools (which charge fees to the parents of the pupils) or at home. There are currently five stages of education within the state school system: early years, primary, secondary, Further Education (FE) and Higher Education (see footnote)⁷.

Education is compulsory for all children between the ages of five and sixteen. In addition, all young people are required to continue in learning or training until the end of the academic year in which they turn eighteen. All three and four-year-old children are entitled to fifteen hours of free non-compulsory nursery education for 38 weeks of the year. Some two-year-old children from families on low incomes are also entitled to free early years education.

2.8.1 Ofsted

Education in England is regulated by Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted). Ofsted is a non-ministerial government department, formed under the Education (Schools) Act 1992, as part of the major overhaul and centralisation of the school system (Fitzgerald and Kay 2016). Ofsted's powerful and influential positioning can be largely attributed to its explicit involvement in

⁷ Early Years (for children between the ages of 3 and 5 years), Primary (for children between the ages of 5 and 11 years), Secondary (for children between the ages of 11 and 16 years), Further Education (for children/young adults between the ages of 16 and 18 years), Higher Education (adults aged 18 and over)

the formal assessment of educational institutions (ibid).

Initially set up to facilitate a consistent approach to the inspection of primary, secondary and special schools, Ofsted took over the role of inspectorate from Local Education Authorities. Its original responsibility was to inspect schools against specified criteria with judgments rooted in evidence drawn from a variety of sources, including classroom observation, interviews with teachers, heads, parents and governors, and curriculum and management documents produced by the school. To facilitate the process of inspection, Ofsted published the Handbook for the Inspection of Schools (Ofsted 1993), which set out in detail the inspection requirements, criteria and methods. The initial handbook focused on a school's 'value for money': its efficiency, standards of achievement and the quality of its pupils' learning (Levacic and Glover 1997). The main emphasis was on pupils' knowledge and understanding, basic skills (for example, literacy and numeracy), learning skills (such as information gathering and problem solving), attitudes to learning and their progress in learning. Inspections also examined the quality of teaching, the nature and subjects of the curriculum, assessment, recording and reporting, pupils' personal development, behaviour and attendance, special education provision, school management and its financial efficiency, resource quality and management and the school's links with parents and agencies in relation to educational welfare and support.

Ofsted's role increased with the overhaul of Further Education, brought about by the Learning and Skills Act 2000, empowering it to inspect Further Education colleges and school sixth forms. The Care Standards Act (2000) widened Ofsted's powers further to include early childhood education and care. It also took Ofsted's role out of the inspection and advisory spheres for the first time, making it responsible for maintaining a register of approved childminders. Ofsted now takes responsibility for the inspection of all schools, Local Education Authorities, teaching training institutions, youth work, colleges and early years childcare and

education provision in England (Fitzgerald and Kay 2016).

Since its inception in 1992, Ofsted has been widely critiqued. Case, Case and Catling (2000) perceive Ofsted to be an external surveillance and control system: a politically motivated disciplinary regime set up to monitor productivity, accountability and marketisation (Foucault 1977). Making normalising judgements (Foucault 1980) about the quality and effectiveness of schools, their systems and their teachers, Ofsted's managerialist discourse (Pollitt 1990:1) has been seen to forefront the language of attainment over learning and personal development (Case et al. 2000). The publication of Ofsted's subjective reports impacts significantly on schools and their personnel. Teachers' professionalism is compromised (Jeffrey and Wood 1998) and the effects of intensified control over the well-being of teachers has implications for the quality of children's classroom experiences (Case et al. 2000).

2.9 Early Years Education in England

Most children in England commence an infant or primary school in the September following their fourth birthday, where two discrete phases of education operate, each following its own curriculum. They are educated in a class known as 'Reception' until the following September when, they transit to 'Year One'. In a Reception class, children still follow the Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum (DfE 2017) so their learning remains play based. In Year One most children begin to follow the National Curriculum (DfE 2014) which is traditionally delivered via more formal approaches to learning. Table 2.4 demonstrates the complexity of the Early Childhood Education system in England. Throughout this chapter, unless otherwise stated, I will be referring to the English education system as outlined in Table 2.4.

Early Years		Key Stage One	
Pre-school	Reception	Year One	Year Two
Under 4 years old	4 year olds	5 year olds	6 year olds
Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum (DfE 2017)		National Curriculum (DfE 2013)	

Table 2.4 *English early education system*

Early years education relates to learning for three to five-year-olds. Early Years education takes place in a variety of settings including state nursery schools, nursery classes and reception classes within primary schools, as well as settings outside the state sector such as voluntary pre-schools, privately run nurseries or childminders. Up until the age of five children mainly follow the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum.

2.9.1 Early Years Foundation Stage

The Early Years Foundation Stage (DfE, 2014) is a framework of learning, development and care for children from birth to five years old. It enables children to learn through a range of activities. It also ensures:

- children learn through play
- providers work closely with parents
- you are kept up to date on your child's progress
- the welfare, learning and all-round development of children with different backgrounds and levels of ability (including those with special educational needs and disabilities).

The most recent version of the Early Years Foundation Stage (DfE 2017) identifies seven areas of learning and development. These are divided into three prime areas:

- communication and language
- physical development
- personal, social and emotional development.

and four specific areas:

- literacy
- mathematics
- understanding the world
- expressive arts and design

Children's learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage is structured around the 'characteristics of effective learning' (DfE 2014). Children learn by playing and exploring, being active, and through creative and critical thinking, which takes place both indoors and outside.

2.10 Chapter Two Summary

This chapter situates the transition from Reception to Year One in England within an inconsistent educational system which disempowers children and adults by negating their autonomy and agency with its lack of continuity, ambiguous discourse and performance driven agendas that can reduce the 'rich competent child' (and teacher) to a 'measurable teaching subject' (Ball and Olmedo 2013: 92). The evidence shows that issues relating to early education transitions are multiple, complex and subject to a web of external influences. Each of these issues are independently disempowering. When combined, however, they create a challenging force which makes the transition from the Reception to Year One

particularly disempowering for the young children concerned. A growing body of research evidences the empowering effects of children's participation in research ([see p.136](#)), however, children's research is not always seen to make a difference. This stops short of true empowerment.

Children's perspectives of transition are sometimes elicited but it is usually the adults who decide what transition looks like for the children. Again, this stops short of true empowerment. This research aims to address the imbalances of power which young children experience during the Reception to Year One transition by giving the children control of the transition process and involving them in research into transition (Dockett and Perry 1999; Clark and Moss 2005). This stems from my strong belief that children are experts in their own lives and their knowledge and expertise is key to improving the quality of transition in our school.

Chapter 3. Literature Review: Transition, Power and Tensions (Theorists, Researchers and their work)

In this chapter I review literature and research relating to transition and power. In order to establish the theoretical framework for my research, I examine power from the perspective of some key theorists, including Foucault (1991), Bronfenbrenner (1989), Giddens (1984), Bernstein (1975), Gibson (1979) and Lave and Wenger (1991). I identify a set of key constructs which enable me to develop a more nuanced understanding of power relations within early education and transition. I review international perspectives on early childhood education and the move from informal to formal education. I also review a range of national and international research relating to power, structure, control, apprenticeship and brokerage. These help me to contextualise the theoretical frameworks used in this study.

3.1 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study represents a synthesis of individual theoretical advancements, each of which has broadened my perspective of one or more aspects of transition and power and, when combined, provides a more powerful lens with which to interpret my area of investigation (Denzin 2009). (See figure 3.1)



Figure 3.1 *Theoretical Framework used in this study*

Foucault's work enables me to broaden my perceptions of power beyond a perspective which views power as a one directional, negative and repressive force. It also helps me to conceptualise the relationship between power, knowledge and discourse and provides a constant source of reference as I broaden my review. The work of other theorists enables me to apply Foucault's theories to the immediate context of my research.

Bronfenbrenner's considerations of transition from an ecological perspective provide an understanding of the role of discourse and knowledge in multi-directional power relations between children and their context.

Giddens' theory of structuration facilitates a deeper understanding of why structures can become modalities of control. It also encourages me to consider classroom structures as part of a discourse which may sometimes lead to feelings of disempowerment.

Bernstein's conceptualisations of rules and routines and Gibson's theory of affordances illuminate the contrasts and complexities within school community practices. They also provide me with a set of tools with which to interrogate the relationship between power, knowledge and discourse within the context of school and transition. This interrogation leads me to conjecture that a knowledge of the structure of the next stage of learning may be a means with which to readdress power imbalances during transition.

Lave and Wenger's conceptualisations of 'communities of practice' and the concept of 'bridging' as a means of smoothing transition enables me to formulate a rationale and methodology for my research.

Schon's theories relating to reflection and reflective practice relationship). Reflective practice, however, recognises the relationship between theory (knowing) and practice (doing) as multi-directional, interconnected and equal (ibid).

Finally, in order to embed the theory within a context of school transitions, I discuss research which evidences the concepts raised by the theoretical framework. I also use the research evidence to identify the gap which my research will fill.

3.2 Power

Power is traditionally seen as 'prohibitive and repressive' (Jackson and Mazzei 2012: 54). Foucault (1980), however, presents an alternative perspective of power. Rather than seeing power as a negative force, Foucault views power as something that forms knowledge and produces discourse (Foucault 1980). Foucault proposes that the manifestation, advancement and growth of power is dependent upon social relationships (Foucault 1980). Instead of seeing power as a possession of certain parties, Foucault perceives every individual to be a vehicle of power operating within a multi-directional field (Foucault 1979). Consequently, power is constantly moving and circulating amongst the capillaries of complex social networks ([see p.71 Nested Systems](#)). For this reason, Foucault does not attempt to find out what power is or where it comes from. Instead he explores, what he sees as, the productive effects of power. Hence, he encourages his supporters to research the mechanisms and technologies that enable power relations and to look closely at how power operates on, through and from the individuals involved in specific power relations (ibid). This facilitates an exploration of power relations during times of transition from a different perspective.

In order to illustrate the complex nature of power relations, Foucault (1980) describes four manifestations of power. These are:

- A multiplicity of force relations
- A process of struggles that transform, strengthen, or reverse the relations
- As a support in which many relations intersect and form either a chain or various cleavages of disjunction or contradiction
- As strategies in which power crystallises and is embodied in the mechanisms and practices of social life

Although Foucault undoubtedly concerns himself with a top down model of power as it generates from those in positions of overarching authority, he is also at pains to point out that power relations are always localised and specific to the subjects involved in their own relationships (Foucault 1982). Every power relationship, therefore, produces its own complexities and must be deliberated within the immediate context (ibid).

3.2.1 Nested Systems

The concept of ecology can support a deeper understanding of Foucault's theories within the context of school and transition (Bronfenbrenner 1998; Bronfenbrenner and Morris 1998; Fabian and Dunlop 2007; Dockett and Perry 2003; Pianta, Rimm-Kaufman and Cox 1999). The term 'ecological', when used in this context, means to relate and combine the most important areas of a child's life (Brostrom 2000). Within the ecological model, therefore, a child's transition through school is understood in terms of the influence of contexts, for example home, school, community, and the connections among these contexts, for example home/school, Reception/Year One) 'at any given period across time' (Pianta et al. 1999: 4).

Bronfenbrenner's (1998) concept of 'nested systems' depicts four ecological systems with which an individual will potentially interact, each nested within the others (figure 3.2).

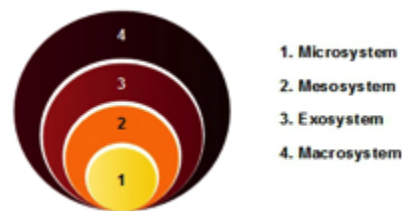


Figure 3.2

Bronfenbrenner's model of nested systems (Madeleine, 2017)

1. The 'Microsystem' is the first, and closest, layer of the nested systems. It encompasses an individual's human relationships, interpersonal interactions and most immediate surroundings, thus depicting the relationship between an individual child and his/her parents, siblings and the school environment.
2. The layer surrounding the microsystem is called the 'Mesosystem'. It encompasses the different interactions between characters contained within the microsystem, for example, the relationships between a child's family and their teachers.
3. The third layer is the 'Exosystem'. This incorporates elements of the ecological system which do not directly affect the child, but may have an indirect influence, for example, if a parent were to be made redundant or have their working hours reduced, this would then indirectly affect their child in that such events would create parental stress and reduce the family income.
4. The outermost layer of the ecological model is known as the 'Macrosystem'. The macrosystem encompasses cultural and social beliefs and decisions and actions which influence an individual child's development. This might include, for example, parliamentary legislation or religious influences

The concept of nested systems helps to explain Foucault's theory of multi-directional power and to position children as vehicles of power within a context of constant power circulation. Bronfenbrenner and others (Bronfenbrenner and Morris 1998; Pianta et al. 1999) describe how children influence the context in which they live and the ways in which those contexts impact on experiences (Dockett and Perry 2003). Interrelationships that are formed in mesosystems are, therefore, continually shifting and changing (Dunlop 2003: 69). Children are constantly interpreting and influencing the interactions that occur as well as being

influenced by the actions of and interactions with others (Bronfenbrenner and Morris 1998). 'Classroom relationships, curriculum and pedagogy are all influenced by the environment and in turn influence it' (Dunlop 2003: 69). This implies the importance of interactions between microsystems, for example, family, school and year groups, during transition. It also highlights how 'expectations, perceptions and experiences' (Dockett and Perry 2003: 6) fostered during these interactions influence the transition process.

3.3 Power and Knowledge

In line with other commentators (Bernstein, 1975, 1990, 1996; Bronfenbrenner 1979), Foucault (1980) connects power with knowledge. What sets Foucault apart from other theorists is the way that he approaches power/knowledge relationships. In his view, power and knowledge express one another and together they create an abstract force. Foucault describes (rather than critiques) 'power/knowledge' relationships (Foucault 1980). In his descriptions, knowledge encourages the effects of power, whilst power gathers and produces knowledge. Hence, the subjects operating within power/knowledge relationships are involved in the dual process of being produced as well as transforming themselves (Foucault 1982). This renders Power/Knowledge relationships volatile and reactive (Foucault 1978). They frequently express one another in the practices of people (Foucault 1978). Within a community of people there can be multiple power relations. The previous experiences and circumstances of those involved in these relationships affect their positioning and individuals may operate within a range of conflicting subject positions. The subtlety and complexity of power/knowledge practices, therefore, produce subjectivity (Foucault 1980; Jackson and Mazzei 2012). This needs to be taken into consideration when analysing power/knowledge relationships.

Foucault distinguishes between 'connaissance' and 'savoir' forms of knowledge. 'Connaissance' is knowledge which is didactic and received. 'Savoir' is knowledge that an individual constructs for themselves based on their experiences and relationships and through which they begin to understand themselves in relation to others (Foucault 1984).

Foucault uses the term 'construct subjectivity' to describe the way in which subjects can transform themselves in relation to others through the knowledge produced within power relations and practices. The dynamics between identity-development and forms of participation are critical to the ways in which individuals 'internalise, challenge or reject the existing practices of their community' (Handley, Sturdy, Fincham and Clark 2006: 644). Identities and practice develop through participation (Handley et al. 2006). Learning, therefore, is not simply about developing one's knowledge and practice, it also involves a process of understanding who we are and in which communities of practice we belong and are accepted (Handley et al. 2006). For example, when a new cohort of children transit to the next phase of learning, they undoubtedly learn and adopt some of the established practices of that community. They also begin to develop their own identities and practices in the community (Wenger 1998). Over time, this can lead to a gradual reshaping of the community (Handley et al. 2006; Bronfenbrenner and Morris 1998; Pianta et al. 1999). This demonstrates how interrelationships fostered within microsystems and the wider mesosystem are always dynamic and changing (Dunlop 2003); how classroom relationships are influenced by the environment, and in turn influence it, (Dunlop 2003) and how the positions of children change in relation to others as they move within and between the microsystems of school. Power relations, therefore, are rarely simple; straight forward or static. Applying Foucault's theories to the context of school transitions makes it easier to comprehend the process by which power and knowledge are constructed through social relations and cultural practices. It also

highlights the strong interrelationship between power relations, knowledge and discourse.

3.4 Power, Knowledge and Discourse

'Discourse transmits and produces power.....(it) also undermines it and exposes it' (Foucault 1978: 100-101). The term 'discourse' has been used to describe a range of verbal and non-verbal communications across a broad range of contexts.

Foucault uses the term 'discourse' to describe:

- a 'general domain of all statements' which have meaning and effect and, thereby, become accepted as 'knowledge' (Foucault 1972: 80)
- a cluster of statements (for example the discourse of racism or the discourse of feminism) (Mills 2003)
- the unwritten rules and practices which produce particular statements (ibid)
- the rules from which statements are formed (ibid)
- the processes through which some statements are circulated, and some are excluded (Foucault 1972)

Foucault utilises the term 'episteme' (a philosophical term derived from the Ancient Greek word ἐπιστήμη, which comes from the verb ἐπίστασθαι, meaning to know, to understand, or to be acquainted and which can refer to knowledge, science or understanding) (Thomas 2009:87) to refer to groupings of discursive formations and the relationships between discourses at one time (Foucault 1991). Mills (2003: 62) further defines episteme as the set of procedures (rules and conceptual tools) that produce knowledge and keep knowledge in circulation.

Bronfenbrenner's notion of nested systems (see p. 66) suggests that discourse from outside of school, for example discourse produced by parliamentary legislation, influences school discourse which in turn influences the child. Policies of government are heavily influenced by the views of a wide range of organisations as well as by media and the general public (Fitzgerald and Kay 2016). All discourse created by influential and powerful organisations and endorsed by government policy has the potential to become a regime of truth. In England, for example, educational institutions operating under the regulatory gaze of Ofsted, compliantly uphold and disseminate Ofsted's powerful discourse, thus helping to strengthen what has often already become a regime of truth (ibid).

Foucault (1979) explores the role that modern-day institutions, including schools, play in shaping power, through the promotion, dissemination, and reproduction of particular discourses (Devine 2002). The specific discourses that exist within institutions (such as schools) have a tendency to define what is normal and, thus, serve to regulate social behaviour (Foucault 1979). In the context of school, discourses also define and regulate what it is to be a child and what it is to be an adult. Hence, 'individuals simultaneously undergo and exercise power in a cycle which extends throughout society' (Devine 2002: 308). During a period of transition, children are subjected to the discourses of their new environment or class. Within these discourses they are expected to conform to established 'norms' which they gradually take on as their own (ibid). These discourses may be interpreted differently by different groups and, hence, develop through time (ibid). Ultimately, however, each group of children who pass through the stage of education will be responsible for disseminating the discourses to the next cohort (ibid). Discourse, therefore, becomes accepted as truth (Foucault 1979). The implication is that rather than being merely a verbal expression of reality, discourse can configure our thinking and understanding and determine how we

interpret (ibid).

3.5 Power, Knowledge, Discourse and Truth

Postmodern thinking challenges modernistic perceptions of truth as something that can be scientifically measured, calculated and proven (Dahlberg, Moss and Pence 2017). It emphasises the effects of power, relationships, personalisation and discourse in a process by which people construct individual understanding (rather than complete truth from separate and unique situations, (Osgood, 2016). Foucault is concerned with how it is that we know something, and the processes by which something becomes established as knowledge (Foucault 1980). For Foucault, knowledge does not come from merely studying something (ibid). Rather it is produced and disseminated by a number of different institutions and practices (Foucault 1981). Viewed from this perspective we may consider knowledge as an objective force that works in the interests of particular groups (ibid). Foucault's work implies that a wide range of strategies serve to construct, maintain and support what is perceived as 'truth', whilst also excluding and countering alternative versions of events (Foucault 1991b). The term 'exclusion' is used by Foucault to denote to a set of practices which keep particular statements in circulation and others out of circulation (Foucault 1981). In order for something to be established as fact or true, therefore, other statements need to be disregarded or discredited (Foucault 1980). Foucault refers to the abstract institutional processes at work which establish some things as a fact or knowledge (Foucault, 1970) and the methods through which knowledge is produced (Foucault 1991a).

In order for something to be perceived as fact, it must first be subjected to a process of endorsement by people who are in positions of authority (Mills 2003: 72). 'Regimes of Truth' are consequently kept in place by a complex web of social

relationships (Foucault 1975: 30). Foucault (1977) analyses the ways in which micro-disciplinary techniques of hierarchical observation, normalising judgements and examinations operate within institutional contexts. Ofsted inspections within schools, for example create regimes of truth (Hall and Noyles 2009). These conditions influence on the micro-politics of school life; position teachers as subjects within shifting discursive frames and influence their professional identities and sense of self (ibid). Foucault examines the ways in which 'effects of truth' are produced within discourses and how different regimes of truth operate at particular times and in particular places. Rather than attempting to expose hidden truths, Foucault's analytical aims are to realise how norms become established within discourse and how discourse produces a normative context for thought and action, which then becomes legitimised as truth (Olssen 2006). Foucault (1979) examines truth from two perspectives: materially, as regimes of truth within discourse, and within practices, as 'games of truth', (Peters 2003: 208). Olssen (2006: 137) defines Foucault's methodology as a 'minute and detailed analysis of practices', an endeavour 'to account through a microscopic materialism for the emergence of our present truths'.

Foucault uses the term 'hegemony' to refer to a state within society whereby those who are dominated by others take on board the values and ideologies of those in power and accept them as their own (Foucault 1980b). This leads to them accepting their position within the hierarchy as natural or for their own good (ibid). Any information that has been produced could play a part in supporting and maintaining existing power relationships (Mills 2003). In particular, Foucault brings to light the way in which people assert power over others by establishing spheres of influence that serve to affirm what is accepted as 'true' or 'false' (Foucault 1991). Thus, he asserts, it is important to counter the types of information which have been disseminated by such organisations as the government or government institutions (ibid). Hence, discourse can be seen as a

'system which structures the way that we perceive reality' (Mills 2003: 55) and often constrains our perceptions. It is this notion that everything is constructed and apprehended through discourse that intrinsically links discourse with power and renders discourse as a powerful tool (Foucault 1991). Power relations, however, are negotiated and only possible when there is a degree of freedom on each side (Foucault 1989). When the field of possibilities is open people may react to each other in various ways (ibid). This leads to various points of instability, yet there are no relations of power without resistances (ibid). Power relationships, therefore, are constantly in tension (ibid).

Mills (2003: 125) warns us to be 'sceptical about the value of Foucault', drawing particular attention to the way in which some people have disregarded Foucault's methodological principles and accepted his theories as 'truth'. Rather than advocating rigid allegiance to a set of theories, however, Foucault (1980) refers to his approaches as 'gadgets' which can be utilised as 'thinking tools'. Giddens (1984) provides a theoretical framework that facilitates a deeper understanding of why structures can sometimes lead to feelings of disempowerment.

3.6 Power, Structure and Control

Giddens (1984) theorises on the 'structuration' of social systems through social interaction. Structure is defined by Giddens as the rules and resources which individuals draw upon in the course of social interaction (ibid). Giddens (1979) categorises structures into those of 'signification' and 'legitimation', for example rules, modes of discourse, 'typifications' and social norms, and structures of 'domination', for example resources (ibid). Structures of signification and legitimation provide ways of knowing how to behave in social life, whilst structures of domination determine an individual's ability to sustain and change existing methods of interaction by controlling their access to resources, time and

space, social interaction and 'life chances' (Devine 1998). Structures become ingrained in practice as individuals within a setting, or institution, interact with one another (Giddens 1984). Once ingrained, they begin to position individuals with respect to one another, hence shaping their experiences, relations and identity (ibid). Devine (1998) applies Giddens' theory of structuration to the experience of adult-child relations in school in the following model/framework (figure 3.3):

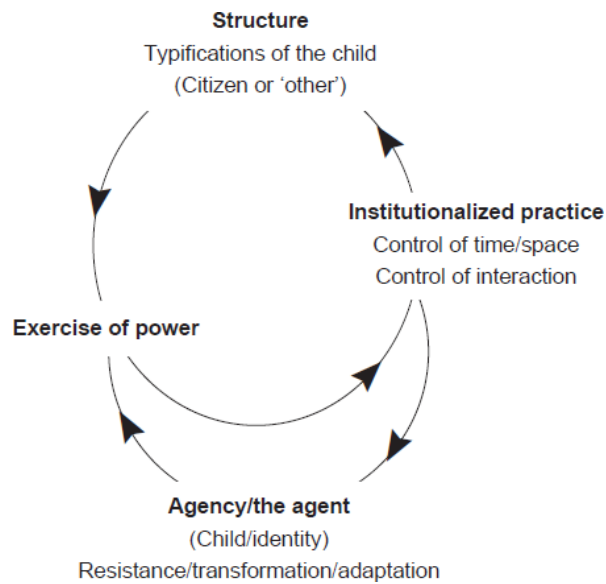


Figure 3.3 Devine's model of adult/child relations in school (Devine 1998)

Within the context of school, structures of signification refer to the modes of discourse and 'typifications' which adults impose on children (Devine 1998). Structures of legitimation refer to the norms which are transmitted to children through the process of socialisation, whilst structures of domination refer the power of adults to influence children's identity formation through resource control (Devine 1998). Resources that can be controlled by adults include

children's movements and activities as well as those which are economically allocated (ibid). The license to control derives from the tradition that adults hold a superior status within social hierarchy (ibid). It is further compounded by the compulsory nature of schooling (Devine 1998). Giddens (1991) argues that control of this nature contributes to children's practical consciousness in relation to their position, role and status within school. This, in turn, frames their perception of themselves as active participants with a right to be heard (Devine 2002). Hence, it is through these structures that children begin to construct identities for themselves within the context of school (ibid).

'Social structures are both constituted by human agency and yet at the same time are the very medium of that constitution' (Giddens 1976: 121). Social structures, therefore, can be seen as both the outcome and the medium of human action as they are produced, reproduced and transformed through 'knowledgeable human action' (Devine 2002: 307), giving rise to both 'intended and unintended consequences' (ibid). Within such a system of social structures, children continually evaluate and monitor their behaviour (directly and indirectly) in relation to the expectations and evaluations of others (ibid). Giddens (1976) refers to this active process of social positioning as 'reflexive monitoring'.

Reflexive monitoring is particularly heightened at a time of transition as children are usually less confident within their new environment (Bryce-Clegg 2017). The way in which social settings, such as schools, construct and operate their 'in house' structures, determines what kind of power is exercised within the process of children's reflexive monitoring (Devine 2002). Where adult-child relations encourage children's active participation and voice and the practice is shaped through a transformative process of reflection, negotiation and critical engagement (Devine 2002), for example, power can be seen as empowering. Alternatively, in contexts where there is a strong emphasis on adult-defined goals

and expectations power may be seen as dominating (ibid).

Devine (2002) argues that the power to influence the time-space paths of individuals is an authoritative resource which facilitates their surveillance and control. Giddens (1987) suggests that surveillance is provoked by disciplinary techniques. In the context of school, such techniques might include timetables which establish boundaries on the nature and extent of children's activity and restrictions to their access to work and play space. Specific discourses which relate to the control and organisation of children's time and space in school can impact on children's sense of themselves as individuals with a particular position and status in school, as well as their 'sense of connectedness' to their learning experiences (Devine 2002: 309). The organisation and 'weighting' of timetables can shape children's perceptions of which subjects are more valued in education and adult life (Woods 1990, Pollard 1997). A change in pedagogy from play based to formal learning inevitably results in increased control over children's time and space, which demands considerable adaptation at a time of transition (Brooker 2008).

Whilst modern theories of sociology position children as passive 'becomings' (Durkheim 1979: 150), contemporary postmodern sociological theories argue that children (like adults) have agency with regard to social roles (Oswell 2013). Giddens (1979) substantiates Foucault's perception of power as something which circulates between people, in the course of social interaction. He suggests that (rather than power in isolation) it is access to resources that shape social relationships (ibid). Hence, (like Foucault) Giddens conceptualises power as something which is exercised through social interaction in a 'continual flow between structural and agentic influence' (Devine 2002: 308), rather than being a possession of participants in that interaction (ibid). This suggests that they can both affect and be affected by social structures and by the 'constructions and

institutions of childhood' (Oswell 2013, p.45).

Every act which contributes to the reproduction of a structure is also an act of production, and as such may initiate change by altering the structure at the same time as it reproduces it.
(Giddens 1979:69)

Giddens refers to the relationship between structure and agency as a 'duality of structure' (1984: 25). Mayall (2002), however, questions how much agency people have with regard to social structuration, contending that people do not create social structuration, 'they reproduce and transform it' (Mayall 2002: 33). This implies that Giddens may be overstating the 'creative capacity of individual agents'. The extent of a child's agency is also contentious (Oswell 2013). Oswell (2013) queries if children's agency is different to adult agency and whether agency can be differentiated, for example, by age or ability. Whilst Giddens associates agency with power, knowledge and reflexivity: the capability and capacity to influence, control, 'make things happen' and make a difference (2013: 46), some researchers who work with very young children suggest that agency develops over time.

The theoretical concepts reviewed thus far forefront the interrelationship between power and knowledge and discourse (Foucault, 1980). It is, therefore, plausible to infer that knowledge of the structure of the next stage of learning could be a tool with which to begin to readdress power imbalances during transition. Bernstein and Gibson present theoretical frameworks that could facilitate a deeper understanding of this conjecture.

3.7 Knowledge, Control and Rituals

Bernstein (1996) distinguishes between *local* and *official* knowledge. Within the

context of transition, local knowledge reflects the values of home and community, whilst official knowledge reflects what is valued in school (ibid). Local and Official knowledge frequently differ (ibid). Bernstein uses the metaphors *horizontal* and *vertical* to accentuate the differences between social organisations of knowledge which occur both inside and outside of school (1999). Within Bernstein's theory (1990), horizontal discourse organises knowledge in a way that is segmented, oral, local, context dependent and specific, tacit, multi-layered, and contradictory across but not within contexts, (this is often how knowledge is organised outside of school). Vertical discourse, meanwhile, favours a more coherent, explicit and systematically principled organisation of knowledge which is hierarchically organised and may involve specialised language (1996). Bernstein's theory of horizontal and vertical discourse resonates with Foucault's theory of 'connaissance' and 'savoir' discourses, (this frequently characterises the organisation of knowledge in school) (Foucault 1989). Official knowledge, however, is what matters in school (Brooker 2002). Acquisition of official knowledge, therefore, can lead to school success which may, in turn, lead to power and status in the school community (Brooker 2002).

Knowledge can be acquired *implicitly* or *explicitly*, through *visible* or *invisible* pedagogies (Bernstein, 1990). According to Bernstein (1990), the degree of visibility within a school's pedagogy is dependent on two key concepts. Bernstein refers to these concepts as *classification* and *framing* (Bernstein 1990). '*Classification* defines the strength of the boundaries which exist between categories' (Brooker 2002: 45), for example between home and school; teachers and children and between subjects. When subjects are clearly defined classification is said to be strong and when subjects are merged classification is weak (McInnes, Howard, Miles and Crowley 2011). *Framing* determines whether these boundaries are taught explicitly, implicitly or somewhere between the two (ibid). Where control rests upon the teacher framing is said to be strong and where it rests on the child it is said to be weak (ibid). Bernstein's (1990) constructs

can be used to define different styles of pedagogy. For example, where classification and framing are both weak the pedagogy can be described as invisible and when classification and framing are both strong pedagogy can be described as visible. Therefore, the emphasis on child centered play in the early years suggests an invisible pedagogy with weak framing.

Included in what constitutes official classroom knowledge is a knowledge of the rules of the setting. Bernstein (1990) suggests that children need a good understanding of the setting rules in order to access the practices of school and succeed during each stage of their education. In this respect, Brooker (2002: 90) argues that social rules are an 'essential aspect of the social and cultural capital of a pupil'. They also have the potential to create consensus across the school community (ibid). Vartuli and Everett (1998), however, note that teacher and child perceptions about rules can vary considerably. Bronfenbrenner and Morris (1998) draw attention to the misconception that rules are only created by those in power, by suggesting a group or individual's experiences of other microsystems can contribute to the shaping of community rules. In the context of school and transitions, therefore, it is inevitable that each new cohort of children will begin to influence and re-shape the rules of their year group. Such a process of rule negotiation further exemplifies the relationship between power and knowledge, as well as the concept of power as a negotiable process that has the potential to reinforce, transform and even reverse relations (Foucault, 1980).

Rules can be categorised as being either *social order* or *discursive order* related (Bernstein 2004). Social order refers to ways of behaving in the classroom or *regulative discourse* (ibid). Discursive order refers to ways of learning in the classroom (or *instructional discourse*). Brooker (2002: 77) presents the argument that 'weak framing of the regulative discourse in classrooms frequently conceals strong though unspoken expectations about appropriate behaviour'. This implies that invisible (or implicit) boundaries can make it harder for children to access

school because the rules are not made explicit (ibid). Unspoken expectations are, after all, hard to comply with (ibid). From this standpoint, it could be argued that an awareness of school rules enables children to settle into school. Hence, strong classification and framing and pedagogical transparency (at least with regard to the rules of the community) may support the transition process. Rules 'can only be challenged by those who have identified them' (Brooker 2002: 121). A commitment to power sharing and student voice necessitates pupil involvement in negotiation and dialogue about the rules of their class and school community (ibid).

Bernstein (1975) also identifies two types of culture transmitted by schools. *Instrumental* culture is concerned with the transmission of formal school knowledge and vocational skills (ibid). This culture is closely linked to instructional discourse and potentially divisive (ibid). *Expressive* culture is concerned with the transmission of values and norms (ibid). This culture is often linked to regulative discourse and has the potential for creating consensus by uniting learners (ibid). This theory suggests that educators may be in danger of creating paradoxes by dividing and uniting learners at the same time (Brooker 2002). This can be particularly confusing for children who have recently experienced transition to a new environment (ibid). Both instrumental and expressive cultures are often developed through ritual (Bernstein 1971). Expressive order, for example, is maintained perhaps through rituals emphasising unity, such as uniforms and school assemblies. Instrumental order is epitomised in the daily phonics session that takes place in across many infant school classrooms. Bernstein (1990) draws attention to different modalities of control which exist within school communities. *Stratified* control has its roots in *positional* forms of transmission, meaning simply that the status and hierarchy of learners is determined by how they are classified (for example, on the basis of age, gender and perhaps ability) (ibid). The important thing about these classifications is that they are based on fixed attributes (ibid). Learners can do nothing to change things like age and gender. By

contrast, *differentiated* control has its roots in *personal* forms of transmission (Harley 2010). Here the learner is conceived not as having fixed attributes, but variable attributes which undergo development and which can be developed by the school and by teachers (ibid). Harley (2010) uses a simplistic table to emphasise the contrasts between stratified and differentiated control modalities (table 3.1).

Type of school	Stratified	Differentiated
Nature of ritual....	Strong ritual: adult imposed	Less ritual: pupil imposed
Units of organisation are.....	Fixed (eg pupils are grouped according to age, gender, ability)	Not Fixed (eg mixed ability, mixed gender groups)
Membership of units are.....	Fixed (eg pupil can't change age gender etc.)	Not fixed (eg pupil is seen as having potential to develop)
Boundaries between subjects are.....	Strong	Weak
Relationships are.....	Positional (eg strong boundaries between hierarchies like subject heads, teachers, learners)	Personalised (eg hierarchies are blurred by personal relationships which can be achieved)
School rituals celebrate	Domination	Participation
Reward and punishment are.....	Public (form of control is dominance)	Less public (form of control is personalised and therapeutic)
Roles of teachers and pupils are	Clear; 'given'	Ambiguous; have to be negotiated

Table 3.1 *Modalities of Control (Harley 2010)*

The clarity of this definition enables positioning of a play-based curriculum within the sphere of 'differentiated' control and a formal curriculum firmly within the sphere of 'stratified' control.

Rituals in schools are frequently adult imposed (Moss 2010). They exemplify, what Bernstein (1971) refers to as a *stratified* modality of control. Rituals are often determined by those in power, which means they are not always representative of the communities from which children come (Moss 2010). The

culture of every school includes systems and habits which people carry out unquestioningly on a daily basis (Robinson 2015). Schools frequently do things because they have always done them (Robinson 2015) and they often fail to recognise other ways of doing things (Moss 2010). This affords positive advantages to those who already belong to the community for which schools stand (Moss 2010). Brice Heath (1982) suggests that this process enables white middle class children to transit more successfully through the levels of school.

Legislation and policy can be a significant barrier to change in schools (Robinson 2015). The reluctance of some teachers to move away from the constrictive framework of the National Strategies ([see p.83](#)) exemplifies how legislation, policy and performativity measures impact on teacher confidence and autonomy, deterring them from moving beyond that which has been tried, tested and endorsed by those in power (Roberts-Homes 2014; Moyles, 2015; Robinson 2015) ([see p.46](#)). Children from marginalised communities can be adversely affected by stratified modalities of control stemming from this anti-risk culture (Moss 2010). The children involved in this study are predominantly from white middle and working class backgrounds, however, the practice of recycling deeply entrenched attitudes and practice is also at odds with the responsive and personalised pedagogy and values of early years foundation stage (DfE, 2014).

Gibson (1979) and Gibson and Pick (2000) propose the theory of 'affordances'. Affordances refer to what an object can provide or offer rather than its properties or dimensions. Kytta (2002, 2004) clearly exemplifies this concept when analysing different play areas. Smooth playground surfaces, for example, afford running or pedalling whilst a shelter affords a quiet hiding place. The theory of affordances also relates to social and emotional contexts, for example, a caring and reliable parent affords trust and a feeling of security (Good 2007). Affordances are constrained by the functional context of a situation, for example, what is

happening; who is involved and past experience (McInnes et al. 2011). Using this theory as a point of reference for analysing classroom discourse, suggests that children absorb cues from the environment (such as the location of an activity, the depth of adult involvement and the level of choice and control) which they use to assess classroom situations (Howard et al. 2003; McInnes et al. 2010).

Bernstein's and Gibson's theories further highlight the complexities of practices within the school community and the contrasts that exist between communities. This calls for some kind of bridging or mediation to facilitate transition between communities or in this case year groups. Lave and Wenger's (1991) *Communities of Practice* provides an interesting theoretical framework within which to examine the concept of bridging.

3.9 Knowledge and Communities of Practice

Wenger (1998) defines *Communities of Practice* as groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly. The three main characteristics of communities of practice are the *domain*, the *community*, and the *practice*. Within communities of practice there needs to be a common *domain* of interest. Being a member of the *community*, therefore, implies that you are committed to the *domain* (Wenger 1998). The *community* is made up of members who participate in activities and discussions; help each other and share information. Wenger refers to this process as the *practice*. During *practice*, members work together to develop a shared collection of resources, for example, experiences, stories, tools, and ways of addressing recurring problems (Wenger 1998).

Central to every practice is the process of reification. Reification involves taking

that which is abstract and turning it into a 'congealed' form, represented, for example, in documents and symbols (Barton and Hamilton 2005) or, in the case of my school and Year One practice, long established routines and systems.

Reification is essential for preventing fluid and informal group activity from getting in the way of co-ordination and mutual understanding (Wenger 1998). Such procedures provide community members with a formula by which to engage with the practices of a community. It is this same characteristic of reification, however, which can prevent community members from achieving full understanding of community practices (Wenger 1998) and can result in communities of practice that are forever recycling old and tired practice (Edwards 2000). Practice within a community, however, generally leads to relationship building and results in the members learning from each other.

'Learning is a social activity embedded in community' (Fasoli 2003: 39). Every individual belongs to multiple communities of practice (for example, those deriving from friendship groups, families and hobbies) at any one time. Consequently, each member of a *community* contributes his or her own perspective which is shaped by their experiences within other communities. From an ecological perspective the diverse learning experiences of community members inevitably impact on, and shape, the community (Dunlop 2003). In the context of communities of practice, Handley, Sturdy, Fincham and Clark (2006) describe an apprenticeship model. Within this model new members are said to assume a position of *legitimate peripheral participation* (Lave and Wenger 1991) from which they learn how to belong to the community by observing more experienced members. As their competence and knowledge of the community develops most novices move from legitimate peripheral participation to full participation and, hence, to become experts. This places the community of practice approach in line with a constructivist view of learning as a collaborative process between adults and children and between children and their peers (for example, Bruner 1985; Vygotsky 1978).

Dockett and Perry (2005) relate community of practice theories to the concept of situated learning and knowing (Lave and Wenger 1991). Within this concept 'knowing is viewed as practices of a community and the abilities of individuals to participate in those practices (and) 'learning is the strengthening of those practices and participatory abilities' (Even and Tirosh 2002: 232). 'People continually produce meanings of practices through negotiating with each other and the world, rather than receive them and hold them in their minds' (Fasoli 2003: 39). Principles which acknowledge social interaction and context as key to identifying developing interactions and understandings (Dockett and Perry 2003) are shared by Ecological models of transition and Community of Practice. Within these models, transition can be seen as a developing awareness and understanding of the practices of schools and school communities and an ability to engage in those practices.

Two of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) hypotheses within an Ecological model of transition link to the principles underlying Communities of Practice and are particularly pertinent to the concepts of knowledge and apprenticeship. Hypothesis 27 (1979: 211) states that a person's 'developmental potential' is enhanced if 'initial transition into a setting is not made alone'. Hypothesis 42 (1979:212) states that the 'extent to which valid information, advice and experience' relevant to the setting are made available also enhances development. The latter hypothesis (supported by the work of Wenger) highlights the relationship between knowledge and belonging. In order to belong to a community of practice, or feel comfortable within a microsystem, individuals need relevant knowledge.

By engaging in the practices of a school community children develop a bank of *official* knowledge (Bernstein 1971). They also learn to belong to that community (Fasoli 2003). Such legitimate access to the community leads to increased

knowledge and immerses children in a social process of increasingly centripetal participation (Lave 1991). Knowledge and competence, in turn, enables 'newcomers' to gradually become 'oldtimers' (Lave 1991), elevates apprentices to a more powerful position and serves to renegotiate power relationships within the community. The process once again exemplifies Foucault's theory of ever shifting power dynamics in a relevant school context.

Wenger (1998) describes the concept of *brokerage* where experienced members of a community of practice (the *experts*) help to bridge the gap for new members or members of another community (the *novices*). From a similar perspective Middleton, Sawada, Judson, Bloom and Turley (2002: 428) refer to a 'form of mediation between novices in one community, and knowledgeable practitioners in another'. Initiatives which aim to bridge the gap between communities of practice appear particularly relevant to educational transitions. Sharing information about the practices of school communities and the expectations of different year groups is one way of assisting others to engage in these practices and, hence, to become members of the community (Dockett and Perry 2005). Key adults, events and even objects can act as brokers during times of transition (Taddeo 2011). The most effective brokers, however, possess both *official* and *local* knowledge (Bernstein 1971) of the community they represent. This suggests that children who have recent firsthand, experience of transition are in the best position to understand and relate to what the next cohort of children are experiencing. Established members of a year group, therefore, play key roles in helping new children 'to learn the practices that count in the community' (Fasoli 2003: 39).

A number of commentators express reservations about brokerage approach described above. Fabian and Dunlop (2007: 23), for example, suggest that bombarding young children with too much information about a new setting can be confusing and even off putting. Hammond (2015) highlights the importance of

maintaining a balance between making the next stage of education appealing to children whilst establishing realistic expectations. Lombardi (1992) believes that the emphasis should be on ensuring continuity between communities (or in this case year groups) rather than bridging the gap. Dunlop (2002) concurs that 'narrowing the gap' is a more helpful concept to apply to the issue of transition. This notion is further developed by Brostrom (2002) who maintains that receiving settings (or in this case classrooms) should be ready for the child, not vice-versa as is a common misconception. Guidance and support of more experienced peers, however, prepares children for future involvement in similar experiences (Robbins 2003). Interactions between communities form a crucial part of the transition process and strong links between micro-systems (or in this case, year groups) has the potential to support transition. The benefits of this kind of brokerage are also multi-directional. For example, Foucault (1979) advocates giving the less powerful a voice. He also argues that the objects of research are frequently people who are in less powerful positions and the production of knowledge about 'disadvantaged people' through research helps to maintain their less powerful position. The production of information by the marginalised themselves, however, can alter this status quo.

In the context of transition, individuals or groups of children who graduate as brokers hold a position of power within their immediate community and in relation to the novices they induct. Their positioning within the hierarchical institution of the wider school shifts to a higher level. As Foucault asserts, however, power relations are rarely simple, straight forward or static. When children begin a period of transition they move into a position of dependency upon the experts from who they will learn the practices of their next phase of learning (for example, their teachers, teaching assistants or older children), but these 'experts' are also depending on the 'novice' children to carry on the practices of the community (or year group). The success of both experts and novices, however, depends upon the eventual replacement of the 'oldtimers' by

the 'newcomers' (Lave, 1991, p74) at which point the experts positioning reverts back to novice status as they themselves transit to the next stage of learning.

The reviewed literature (Table 2.1, p.31) enabled me to identify a set of theoretical concepts which underpin this study. In this study I combine the work of key theorists (Figure 3.1, p.67) to facilitate an exploration of power relations during times of transition. Foucault's conceptualisations of power as a positive force which forms knowledge and produces discourse are situated within the context of school transitions in this study through the work of Bronfenbrenner (1989), Giddens (1984), Bernstein (1990), Gibson (1979), Lave and Wenger (1998) and others. I utilise Giddens's (1984) theories relating to the role institutional structures play in positioning individuals with respect to one another, Bernstein's (1990) conceptualisation of school rules and Gibson's (1979) theories relating to affordances to develop my understanding of the way in which power becomes crystallised and embodied in the mechanisms and practices of school life. I draw on Bronfenbrenner's (1989) ecological perspective of the influence and connection between different areas of a child's life and the importance of interactions between microsystems to develop my understanding of Foucault's (1980) conceptualisation of power as a multidirectional force which operates on, through and from individuals in the context of school transitions. I also use Lave and Wenger's (1998) theories relating to communities of practice, apprenticeship and brokerage to explore the relationship between power and knowledge.

In order to contextualise the theoretical framework used in this study I reviewed international perspectives on early childhood education and the move from informal to formal education, focusing specifically on the following areas of inquiry:

- Transition from play based to formal curriculum - Discontinuity
- Control over children's time and space

- Power relationships during transition
- Apprenticeship and Brokerage

3.10 International Perspectives on Early Childhood Education: the move from informal to formal education

Early childhood is increasingly recognised as a critical period for a child's cognitive development (United Nations 2017: 4.2). The OECD report *Starting Strong* (OECD 2017: 20) identifies 32 'key indicators' that support the importance of early childhood education and care. Organised learning before the official start of primary school has been shown to boost a child's social, emotional and intellectual development and support readiness for primary education and future learning (Brooker 2008). Pre-primary education is considered an important part of a holistic and robust educational system (United Nations 2017: 4.2). In 2014, two thirds of children worldwide participated in pre-primary or primary education in the year prior to the official entrance age to primary school (United Nations 2017: 4.2). In the poorest countries, however, the rate of child participation in education one year before the start of primary school was much lower. In sub-Saharan Africa, the least developed countries and landlocked developing countries, for example, the rate was only 4 in 10 children, compared to 9 in 10 children in Europe, Northern America, Latin America and the Caribbean (United Nations 2017: 4.2).

'Early childhood' may be defined as the period extending from birth to the age when compulsory schooling begins (Bennett 2001). Kaga, Bennett and Moss (2010) distinguish between historical perceptions of 'early childhood education' and 'early childhood care'. The latter was often developed by societies as a welfare measure for working class children who needed care while their parents were at work, the former as kindergarten or pre-primary educational activities prior to formal schooling. Early childhood education and care services today

address a broad range of goals. Cochran (1993) identifies ten different early childhood education and care goals worldwide, including providing children with health care and nutrition, reducing the effects of child poverty, caring for children of employed parents, emancipating women and encouraging them to enter the labour market, socialising immigrant children and their parents and preparing children for school.

Bertram and Pascal (2016) examined early childhood education policy strategies in eight countries⁸ Although their study demonstrated considerable variation in approaches to early childhood education policy, it also found that national guidance has been developed for early childhood services in most of the countries studied. This guidance was found to be typically broad in scope, with specific guidance on learning content, pedagogic approaches, learning goals and assessment (Murray 2017). All countries encouraged a range of pedagogies, including play-based approaches and academic, formal instructional approaches (Bertram and Pascal 2016). This implied that settings have some choice and freedom to develop their preferred approach. All countries claimed to promote a 'broad and balanced range of learning areas to be covered throughout the age phases, with no narrowing of curriculum focus' as the child approaches entry to primary schooling (Bertram and Pascal 2016: 115).

The global interest in provision of early childhood education and care (ECEC) services has perhaps never been greater (Miller and Cameron, 2014). Internationally there is a growing awareness that early childhood education and care provides a crucial foundation for future learning by fostering the development of cognitive and non-cognitive skills that are important for success in later life (OCED 2017: 3). This is reflected in the United Nations Sustainable

⁸ Bertram and Pascal (2016) examined early childhood education policy strategies in Chile, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Italy, Poland, the Russian Federation and the United States

Development Goals Report (UN 2017), particularly goal 4.2 which aims to ensure that

By 2030, all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education (UN 2017:4.2)

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) plans may look different from country to country depending on their purposes in those societies (Cochran 2011). In one country, for example, a primary goal of early childhood education and care might be to better prepare children from low income families for success in primary school, whilst another country may focus on providing employed parents with childcare. This leads to varying interpretations of what effective ECEC provision looks like. In most European countries early childhood education and care policy goals include both the care of young children when their parents are in work or school and the development of attitudes and skills associated with success at school. Campbell-Barr and Bogatic (2017) propose that the growing global interest in early childhood education and care is increasingly framed by narrow perspectives of ECEC: as a social investment strategy to provide children with the foundations to their lifelong learning within the global knowledge economy. There is, however, a significant variation in the emphasis placed, with some societies opting to focus on broadly defined development and others more narrowly on cognitively oriented learning and subject matter skills (Bennett 2001, Cochran 2011). In order to meet such a broad range of goals successfully, early childhood education and care services require extensive resources and knowledge and expertise that cross multiple disciplines. Today early childhood education and care (ECCE) across the world typically follows either a 'split system' or 'integrated system' (UNESCO, 2010).

Split systems are divided into two sectors which are characteristically governed, in terms of policy making and administration, by different ministries: social welfare

and education: social welfare overseeing children between birth and three years of age (Early Childhood Education and Development phase) and education overseeing children from three upwards (Pre-Primary Education phase). These two sectors are structured very differently with respect to service, workforce, assessment criteria, funding, regulation and curriculum (Kaga, Bennett and Moss 2010). The PPE phase, for example, is predominantly governed at national level, whilst the ECED phase enjoys more flexibility under both local and national governance (Bertram and Pascal 2016). Given their distinct historical roots, 'childcare' and 'early education' services in split systems represent different visions and understandings of children, goals, programmed approaches and contents (Kaga et al. 2010). This can lead to inequalities between childcare and early education, creating discontinuity for children as they transition from one sector to another. In some countries or regions, however, strong culture and tradition in both child education and care sectors, a fear that childcare will be overwhelmed by education and the economic implications of investing in services for children under three and upgrading the childcare workforce strengthens the argument for retaining a split system (ibid). Countries or regions that currently operate a split system of early childhood education and care include France, Hungary and Flanders (the Flemish speaking community of Belgium).

Integrated systems, by contrast, assign national responsibility for all areas of early childhood education and care to a single ministry, thus promoting a more consistent and coherent response to early childhood (Bertram and Pascal 2016). Countries that have adopted an integrated response include Botswana, Brazil, England, Finland, Iceland, Jamaica, New Zealand, Norway, Romania, the Russian Federation, Scotland, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Vietnam and Zambia. Since the 1980s most early childhood and education systems have situated integration within education. A ministry's strong commitment to children's development and education, however, is the most important factor to consider when allocating

responsibility for early childhood education and care. Finland, for example, has successfully integrated early childhood education and care within social welfare (Bertram and Pascal 2016).

One concern is that integration within the education sector can lead to downward pressure of the school system and its methods on the early childhood education and care system (ibid). Some early childhood communities are cautious of schools and their ways of thinking and working, believing that a close relationship with education risks inappropriate goals and methods being pushed down into early childhood education and care services from 'the powerful school system' (ibid 2010: 55). Those countries which emphasis early childhood education and care as providing a preparation for school generally favour a narrower set of academic outcomes for children, such as literacy and numeracy (Bertram and Pascal, 2016).

Children across the world arrive at school at different stages of 'readiness' (Crehen 2016). This may account for why there are higher expectations placed on six-year-olds in England than in Finland (Alexander 2003) and why many preschools in England adopt a more formal approach to the teaching of mathematics than teachers in Korea and Japan (Whitburn 1996). Bossok, Latham and Rorem (2015) found that kindergartens and pre-schools in America are also becoming more formal in their approach, with a quarter of surveyed teachers reporting that there was no time for play in their classrooms. Li (2017) found evidence that early childhood education in mainland China, Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan is attempting to move away from traditional subject based curriculum and formal learning in favour of a progressive, child-centred, play-based curriculum. Given the range of deep rooted social-cultural factors in Chinese societies, such as unfavourable teacher-student ratios, parental expectations and performance-orientated educational philosophy (Li 2002, Zhu and Zhang 2008), it is unsurprising that whole class direct instruction still dominated Chinese

classrooms in 2011 (Li 2011).

Although early years education is important, formal education practices which profoundly focus on academic skills at the expense of holistic development and child-initiated learning can have long term negative effects on children's mental health, social behaviour, motivation and self-esteem without having any lasting positive effect on their performance and academic outcomes (Sylva and Nabaco 1996, Crehan 2016). During the first few years of formal schooling children who start learning early sometimes out-perform later starting peers; however, their initial gain gradually decreases (Kavkler, Tancig, Magajna and Aubrey 2000: McGuinness, Sproule, Bojke, Trew and Walsh 2014) and can reverse (Marcon 2002).

In Canada and Japan children start formal schooling at the age of six. In Finland, Singapore and Shanghai formal schooling begins when children reach the age of seven. As a consequence, children in these countries are not expected to work towards academic outcomes, such as reading, until at least the age of six. Neither are early years practitioners compelled to work towards children's academic readiness for school (Crehan 2016). This means that no child is expected to demonstrate academic outcomes until they have had time to develop the skills, attitudes, knowledge and understanding that will enable them to do so. This does not mean that high quality educational provision before the age of six is unimportant (Heckman 2008). Children's pre-academic skills do not always develop unaided. Heckman (2008) suggests that the most effective early years providers focus on building motivation and character alongside the cognitive development of children's pre-academic skills, through playful learning. They work to develop children's social skills, self-regulation, planning and language development (Crehan 2016). They also foster positive learning dispositions (Sylva 1994).

Children who commence formal schooling at a younger age may not have had sufficient time to develop the range of pre-academic skills that will enable them to access formal education (Frey 2005, Crehan 2016). Approaching formal schooling without the necessary skills to succeed can affect young children's social and emotional wellbeing and sense of belonging, preventing them from feeling 'suitable' in their new learning environment (Brostrom 2002: 52). This places them in a stressful situation which can diminish their self-confidence and raise their anxiety levels (Bryce-Clegg 2017). This can impact negatively on their experience of transition (Brooker 2008).

3.11 Research Evidence: Transition, Control and Disempowerment

Research literature in the field of early childhood transition is extensive. In order to review research that was most relevant to my specific area of study, therefore, it was necessary to establish parameters for my literature search (Thomas 2009). Table 2.1 (p.31) illustrates the parameters I applied to my initial search. Once I had completed the initial search and reviewed the findings of my search, I applied the following selection criteria to ensure that I focused my written analysis of research on the research areas that were most relevant to my study:

- Transition from play-based to formal curriculum/discontinuity
- Control over children's time and space
- Power relationships during transition
- Apprenticeship/Brokerage

My review encompassed a range of national and international research. Sample sizes extended from one class in one school to large scale studies involving many schools. The research participants included local authorities, senior leaders,

teachers, parents and children. Due to variances in the way in which school systems are structured in different countries this research cannot be compared like for like. As previously acknowledged in this thesis (see p.45), children make the transition from less formal to formal schooling at different ages, dependent upon the education system in the country in which they are attending school. Table 3.2 provides an outline of the research reviewed in this chapter, the countries in which the research took place and the age at which children usually transit from play based learning to a more formal approach in those countries. The difference between what is considered to be less formal and formal is also ambiguous. Most children, however, do (at some stage in their schooling) experience a transition to more formal education. Some similar themes, thus, transcend continents.

Researcher(s)		Country	Age at which children transit from play based to formal
White and Sharp Sharp, White, Burge and Earnes Cleave, Jowett and Bate Fabian Hendy and Whitebread Bulkeley and Fabian Bryce-Clegg Oxfordshire Research Brooker	2007 2006 1982 2009 2002 2006 2017 2006/9 2006	England	5 years (Year One) (although 4 year olds in Reception are increasingly meeting more formalised approaches)
O’Kane O’Kane and Hayes	2007 2007	Northern Ireland	4- 5 years
Martlew, Stephen and Ellis	2011	Scotland	5 years
Skinner, Bryant, Coffman and Campbell Magione and Speth Entwhistle and Alexander	1998 1998 1998	USA	5 years
Einarsdottir	2007 2003 2010 2013	Iceland	6-7 years
Dockett and Perry Grieshaber Petriwskyj Bablett, Barratt-Pugh, Killgallon and Maloney Bowes, Harrison, Sweller, Taylor and Neilsen-Hewitt Margetts Dunlop	2002/4/6 2009 2005 2011 2009 2006/13 2002	Australia	Children are not legally required to start formal schooling until they are 6 years old
Brostrom	2009	Denmark	6-7 years
Lillemyr	2001	Norway	6-7

Table 3.2 *Outline of the research reviewed in this chapter*

The dominant themes that occur in this research largely illustrate pedagogic discontinuity. Research projects report on the shift from child led to adult led learning and adult control over children’s time and space, leading to increased dependence and a loss of identity. The evidence shows a change in emphasis from social development to cognitive learning as children transit to more formal schooling. The research also highlights downward pressures on teachers and children as the main cause of discontinuity.

In Scotland a study relating to the impact of the Scottish ‘active learning’ initiative (Martlew, Stephen and Ellis 2011), which aims to address the imbalance between

child and adult directed learning, found that children's time and space in a more formal class environment was almost completely adult controlled. Martlew, Stephen and Ellis (2011) reported that 'Play based' learning in Scotland usually consisted of a time restricted period within the school day, when adult selected groups of children rotated around prescribed 'play' activities according to a teacher generated timetable. In contrast to the physical lay-out of pre-school classrooms, most of the classrooms involved in the project were overcrowded with tables and chairs. In light of research by White and Sharp (2007) in England which suggests that children are highly attuned to changes in their physical environment, it could be argued that cues from most of the 'active learning' environments were more likely to convey messages of formality than play.

Skinner, Bryant, Coffman and Campbell's (1998) research into more formalised practices in USA classrooms found that typically children's day was divided into discrete lessons or tasks resulting in numerous transitions of time and space throughout the day (for example, maths time, circle time, play time). This was particularly problematic for children with special needs who can find transition and changes in routine disconcerting (ibid). Also, in the USA, Kagan and Neuman's (1998) large scale review found that only a minority of the kindergarten classes studied built on children's previous experiences and knowledge. Cleave, Jowett, and Bate (1982) study of continuity from preschool to school in Berkshire (England) highlighted the acute shift in balance between child and adult initiated (controlled) activities which frequently occurs when children progress into formal education. Cleave et al found that there was typically a transition from as much as 70% to as little as 20% child-initiated activities (ibid).

Recognising that the abrupt shift from early years free flow access to the outdoors to adult controlled access in Key Stage One, Fabian (2009) reports on another English initiative through which one school handed back some control of outdoor space to Key Stage One children. The purpose of this move was to support the

transition from the outdoor area in the Foundation Stage to the set times of school playtime that they would encounter in Key Stage One. Adaptations to the established provision included:

- Giving the Foundation Stage children the option to join in with whole school play with open access to come and go from the security of the Foundation Stage outdoor area
- A buddying system where older children support the Foundation Stage children during whole school playtimes
- A friendship bench
- Appealing equipment and resources
- Quiet areas
- 'Space Time' for Key Stage One children during which they could use the outdoor areas for learning activity

In evaluating the initiative, Fabian concluded that the school had 'helped to minimise change through a strategy of gentle vertical transition that attempted to give continuity to children's playtime' (Fabian 2009: 7). She also reported that the Year One children particularly enjoyed 'Space Time', because they could flow in and out as much as they had done in Reception. What is unclear from the research, however, is whether the outdoor 'learning activities' they were 'free' to engage in were pre-determined by an adult and how much control of the outdoors they actually had when they got out there. The Year One teacher's comment that playtime was still important because it gave the children time when 'nothing was demanded of them' (Fabian 2009: 7) may indicate that the children were only afforded partial control of the outdoors during Space Time. In which case, it could be argued that time and space was still very much under adult control.

Irish children in O'Kane's study (2007) reported a loss of independence during

transition, with a lack of autonomy and a strong emphasis on obedience and compliance. This echoed the findings of research by the Southern Education and Libraries Board (SELB 2010) in Northern Ireland which found nursery children behave more independently and take on more responsibility than children in the next stage of schooling (Primary 1). O’Kane (2007) noted that there were only limited opportunities for sustained, shared thinking in primary, however, children who had good social skills, could concentrate and listen for short periods of time and who were able to negotiate classroom life independently were more likely to be successful at primary level (O’Kane 2007). O’Kane (2007) acknowledges that this is a difficult balance for young children to achieve. Barriers to a more transition friendly approach included class size, adult: child ratios and lack of training in play-based pedagogies. Consequently, there was a general lack of continuity which had an impact on transition.

Hendy and Whitebread (2002) discovered that many English teachers and parents also believed that children’s competence and ability to construct their own learning was increasingly underestimated as children move through school. The suggestion is that, as children move through the school, control over their time and space deters them from acting independently and encourages them to become dependent upon adults (ibid). This was further exemplified by Irish children in O’Kane and Hayes’s study (2007) who expressed sadness that they were only allowed to play on Friday, but they were generally accepting that that is the way it is in primary school. An interesting point raised by the research of Sharp, White, Burge and Earnes (2006) in England was the incongruence between Reception and Year One Teachers’ definitions of independence. Both sets of teachers involved in the study stressed the importance of children being ‘independent’, however, it became clear that ‘independence’ took on a different meaning in each of the year groups. Reception staff perceived independence as children’s ability to initiate their own learning. Year One staff, on the other hand, perceived independence as children’s ability to follow instructions and get on with

work set by the teacher.

In a review of international studies, Einarsdottir (2007) found that children internalise a traditional and stereotypical view of school. They also take rules for granted and accept them unquestioningly (ibid). In Australia Dockett and Perry (2002) discovered that children wanted to know the rules and are very aware that they needed to know the rules to function at school, stay out of trouble and adjust to school life. Sanctions relating to rules (for example, getting your name on the board) caused anxiety for children. Rules were also of great importance to the Australian children in Margetts' study (2006), especially rules that related to social adjustment or organisational adjustment (such as lining up, responding to bells or where the toilets were located). In the USA Skinner, Bryant, Coffman and Campbell (1998) found that teachers created rules which accumulated over time and encompassed nearly every aspect of time, space and behaviour as a means of managing transitions and behaviour and retaining power and control. Children who were seen to follow the rules were praised whilst those who progressed academically, but did not abide by the rules, were labelled as 'unfocused', 'immature' or 'having a bad attitude' (ibid: 304). Children who had been used to the less structured and formal environment of pre-schools, however, often found instructions and rules confusing (for example, stopping an activity they were engrossed in abruptly to make a transition or freezing in response to a given signal). Also, in the USA Entwistle and Alexander (1998) found that children who conform to the rules and expectations of school do better (for example by getting better marks and achieving better in tests). In Australia Dockett and Perry's research (2007) concluded that changes in discipline and the way in which good behaviour is promoted is a major cause of discontinuity between play based and formal education.

Arguably the most powerful, controlling factor in the structure of formalised classrooms worldwide is classroom practice and, more specifically, the leap from

play based to formal practice. This is a concern that has been raised in all of the research projects reviewed. The discontinuity it can cause is the instigating factor for most of the projects. Bertram and Pascal (2002), identified some level of discontinuity between early years and primary practice in most of 20 countries involved in their review of early years provision. Arnold, Bartlett, Gowani and Merali's (2006) review of transition found discontinuity in practice and pedagogy in several continents. Their report includes the observation that in most educational systems children are viewed as a changing identity, transforming abruptly from someone who requires holistic care, play and self-initiated learning to someone who can cope with formal instruction and isolated activities to enhance cognitive development. In Australia where there has been a prominent focus on smoothing the process of transition research by Grieshaber (2009) and Petriwskyj (2005) highlighted pedagogic discontinuities between the early years and school.

Using teachers' comments, the Oxfordshire (Oxford County Council 2006, 2009) researchers in England were able to identify the common discrepancies between Reception and Year One practice (as illustrated in table 3.3). The English children involved in Sharp et al.'s (2006) research recognised that Year One would be different from Reception. Einarsdottir's (2003) data showed that many of the Icelandic children involved in her study were preoccupied with the ways in which the structure of primary school would differ from their current pre-school setting (for example, in organisation, size, playtimes and timetabling) and the rules of school.

All of the parents involved in the Bulkely and Fabian (2006) English study felt that in Year One the ethos of the class changed towards cognitive learning rather than social development. This caused the researchers to reflect on the importance of personal, social and emotional well-being (especially during times of transition) as a firm foundation for affective learning. Attitudes towards discontinuity,

however, vary and there are inconsistencies between what each of the main stakeholders perceive to be important. Whilst most of the parents involved in the Bulkely and Fabian (2006) study discussed transitional discontinuities in terms of their child's emotional well-being, happiness and their physical resilience (such as, whether they were still able to socialise with their friends and how well they managed the longer school days), the teachers mainly focused on how well the children were coping with the demands of the curriculum.

Also in England, parental responses generated from the Sharp et al. (2006) research varied. Some parents were very positive about the perceived change in pedagogy: believing that their children were ready to move on to more formal modes of schooling. The majority of parents, however, expressed some concerns: mainly related to the change from play based to more formal that occurred in Year One. Interestingly, it was the parents of children already in Year One who most consistently voiced such concerns. This fell in line with the responses of teachers (Fisher 2010), who emphasised their concerns about the appropriateness of the experiences provided for children in Year One and the significant differences in pedagogy between the Foundation Stage and Year One. Some of the teachers involved in the Sharp et al. (2006) research project highlighted the conflict involved in attempting to maintain foundation stage practice, whilst being all too aware of the amount of content they were expected to cover in Year One and the need to prepare children from the assessments in Year Two. Staff also identified the move from play based to a more formal and structured curriculum as the most challenging aspect of the transition.

Reception	Year One
Free Flow or frequent access to outdoor space – Usually permanently and solely designated to Reception	Less access to outside learning – Often restricted to whole school ‘playtimes’
Larger classrooms that encourage active play.	Often smaller classrooms with an emphasis on static learning eg tables and chairs dominated.
Higher adult/child ratios (1:15)	Lower adult/child ratios (can be only one teacher for the whole class of up to 30 children)
Practical hands, hands on approach to learning	More abstract, less active learning
Personalised, self-initiated learning	More whole class learning/‘carpet time’
Continuous Provision providing opportunities to engage in extended self initiated learning	Greater compartmentalisation of the children’s day (for example, timetabling of Literacy, Maths, Assembly, and Playtime)
	Increased pressure to become part of the school (for example by attending whole school assemblies)
Integrated planning	Greater emphasis on discrete planning (for example Literacy and Maths plans)
EYFS	Planning based National Strategies and Schemes of Work
Tracking by teachers’ observations	An emphasis on progress tracking through children’s books
An emphasis on child initiated learning	More adult initiated learning
Resources reflecting children’s interests and schemas	More subject based learning resources
	More fixed grouping of children (for example, for Maths and Literacy)
	More formal feedback to parents (for example, parent’s evenings)/Less opportunities for parents to contribute to their children’s assessment profiles
	Pressure to get children ‘ready’ for Year Two (and the SATs)
	An expectation from parents that learning is more formal
Self accessing resources. Child led learning during which adults support and extend rather than lead.	Less independent use of the environment and resources/greater dependency on the teacher

Table 3.3 *Discrepancies between Reception and Year One practice (OCC 2009)*

Teachers' responses from the Oxfordshire Report (OCC 2006, 2009) (England) were mostly negative and consistent with the initial concerns that had prompted the report. The teachers worried that developmentally appropriate practice (see [DAP](#)) was not currently the 'norm' in the majority of Year One classrooms. Their comments suggested that a lot of the 'shift in practice' in Year One was a direct or indirect result of top-down pressure felt by the teachers and, thereby transmitted to the children and their parents. There was also a general consensus between the Reception and Year One teachers. The researchers analysed the teachers' responses (from both sides of the Reception/Year One divide) by categorising them under five main headings (into which 93% of the responses fell). Understandably, many of the responses fell into more than one category. The categories that emerged, however, were thus:

- Children being bored/restless (79%)
- Children not having enough time to play (68%)
- Teachers feeling uncomfortable about current Year One Practice (37%)
- Explicit reference to the constraints of the Literacy Strategy (88%)
- The extent of the gap between the Foundation Stage and Year One (73%)

Given the context of Oxfordshire research (OCC 2006, 2009), the nature of the comments and the fact that only 7% of the teachers' responses spoke positively about the transition, it is somewhat surprising that only 37% of the teachers' comments suggested that they were uncomfortable with current Year One practice. It is also interesting to note that the largest percentage of comments made explicit reference to the Literacy Strategy (another top down constraint). Not all teachers, however, convey the same level of concern about the leap from play based to formal learning. Brostrom's (2002) cross continent comparison of the issue found American teachers generally keen to address discontinuity whilst Danish teachers preferred to regard the two settings as separate. This may well be because the transition from play based to formal learning in Denmark occurs

when the children are older. The Oxfordshire research also highlighted the variation between what teachers in England were concerned about and what the children were concerned about. Teachers (for example) were more concerned with the curriculum and learning opportunities, whilst children were more interested in social aspects (in particular their friends, playtimes and the toilets).

Research also reveals mixed reviews from children relating to discontinuity. As one would expect, not all children's experience is the same. O'Kane and Hayes (2007), for example, found Irish children who disliked school (except on Fridays when they were allowed to play) as well as some children who viewed discontinuity as a treat and relished the prospect of hard work, discrete subjects (such as Maths, Literacy and Science) and more reading. The majority of English children surveyed in the Oxfordshire research (OCC 2006, 2009) were 'looking forward' to Year 1 (Fisher 2010: 13). Frequently cited reasons for this positivity were largely connected to rites of passage. Some children relished the idea of being older, doing harder work and accessing more 'grown up' resources (such as the 'big playground'). Nearly a quarter of the children's responses in the same report (OCC 2006), however, were either entirely or partially negative. Negative comments fell broadly into two categories. Children expressed sadness about what they were leaving behind (for example, their teachers, toys and equipment) and anxiety about what was to come (for example, a new teacher, different room, big playground).

Sharp et al (2006) found that many of the English children's comments about their experiences in Reception related to the play-based activities they enjoyed (for example, role play and playing outside). The importance of social interaction with other children was also notable. The children recognised that Year One would be different from Reception. Some of them worried about the expected workload and others identified that there would be fewer opportunities to engage in the activities they enjoyed. Both Einarsdottir (2003b) (Iceland) and the Oxford Report

(OCC 2006) (England) found that children had mixed feelings about the transit: some children looking forward to 'growing up' and moving on, some children worrying about missing pre-school and some children anxious about the changes in store. Einarsdottir (2012) found that many of the children's comments related to their pre-occupations with what was to come. They also appeared to have an underlying expectation and acceptance that changes in their lives were about to happen. Bennett (2006) argues that the only countries where discontinuity is not a problem are those that lack play based early years provision.

The Icelandic children involved in the Einarsdottir (2013) study were mainly concerned with the increased focus on academic study and sitting still. English children involved in the Sharp et al (2006) project particularly mentioned factors such as a reduction in play opportunities, fewer opportunities to go outside and not being able to choose who they worked with in the list of regrets. In line with other research, 'the carpet' featured negatively in the children's comments. They perceived 'carpet time' and sitting still as 'boring', 'too long' and a waste of time.

In his recent case study project, Bryce-Clegg (2017) worked with teachers, parents and children from eight different settings in one authority in England to develop Year One practice that was more in line with that of Reception. Based on a theory that children's potential to engage in their learning is optimum when they feel most comfortable, the aim of the project was to create an approach to minimise the potential for anxiety and maximise the potential for attainment for the children in Year One. The main indicator for success within the project was based on academic attainment and children's level of well-being and involvement using the Leuven scales (Laevers 1994). To establish a project baseline, teachers from each school carried out a well-being and involvement assessment of six children whilst they were in Reception and again when the children moved into Year One. The baseline results showed that of 32 out of the 48 children assessed dropped at least one scale point in both well-being and involvement following transition and

these children's academic attainment also dipped (ibid, p.93). Following a year of practice reviews (during which the teachers made changes to their practice in order to facilitate a more fluid transition to Year One) the same assessments were carried out. The results showed that 40 out of 48 maintained their well-being and involvement scores after transition. This indicated that the methods used to support the children through transition following the implementation of new practice had a significant impact on both wellbeing and involvement.

A number of research projects highlight children's perspectives of their power relationships during the transition to more formal education. Einarsdottir's (2010) study uses a theoretical framework about children's rights to democracy to investigate Icelandic children's perspectives of their status/position in school and their influence on decision making. The six and seven-year olds involved in the study perceived that primary school was 'stricter' than pre-school. They also perceived that the main role of their teachers was to educate them in reading, writing and maths (which in general they considered to be boring). The children did not feel that they had any influence on the school or the curriculum (ibid), unlike the democratic environment of their pre-schools (where they had the opportunity to choose what to do and with whom) in school they were subject to the decision making of the teacher and restrictions of the curriculum. In their minds, moving from pre-school to primary school involved a change of social status (Einarsdottir 2013). Their positioning within the education system had shifted from the oldest and most respected members of the pre-school community (and hence a position of expertise) to being the youngest in primary school (the novices). 'Many of the children saw themselves as powerless' (Einarsdottir 2013: 73). There was a general recognition and acceptance that the teacher had the power which they had no option but to follow.

In England Brooker (2006) found that pre-school (children who were about to transit to school) had an exaggerated view of the differences and problems that

were to come. Siblings, peers and even parents and other adults can sometimes 'peddle myths' that may cause stress (Fabian 2013: 50). When Brooker (2002) asked children 'Why do you think you have to go to school?' their answers included comments such as 'you have to'; 'mums have had enough of you at home' and 'if you don't the police will get you'. Perhaps even more poignant, one child (who was about to transit to Year One) was reported to have reassured her teacher that when she moved into her new class she was going to be quiet and do exactly what the teacher said (Brooker 1996).

Although researching with a different age group (due to the structure of the Norwegian education), Brostrom's study revealed that up to 24% of the Danish children involved had an outdated impression of school as an authoritarian establishment where children had to sit down and behave quietly. These children understandably felt worried and nervous about starting school. A parallel investigation by Brostrom in 2000, which involved 375 children, found similar results (adding weight to the initial findings). Brostrom's views on whether most children look forward to starting school were further supported by a Norwegian study (Lillemyr 2001) which found that a third of six to seven-year-old children feared starting school.

Children in Poland also associated their role in school with compliance, identifying subordinate duties such as being good; answering questions; listening to the teacher and keeping time (Sikorska 2008). Another significant quote came from a six year old child who recounted 'at school you cannot do the things you feel like doing.....only in recess.....you cannot play 'cos there are no toys'. Summing up similar findings from Australia, Dockett and Perry (2002, 2004, 2005a, 2005b) conclude that children accept their own lowered status, as powerless individuals. Dockett and Perry (2002) propose that children are also aware of wider issues relating to power and are able to link their own positioning with the positioning of others. For example, the children in their study recognised that teachers make the

rules and head teachers make the rules for teachers.

Again, it is essential to acknowledge that the differing ages of the children involved in the research reviewed could play a significant role in how they approach transition. What is clear from these studies, however, is that the transition from play based to formal learning can be an unsettling experience for children regardless of their age or the country in which their early education is taking place. A common denominator in most of the research projects explored was that children often felt inferior during the first weeks or months of formal schooling. Most significantly, children across all studies seemed to unquestioningly accept the nature of school. This may reflect traditional power imbalances during periods of transition and a notable lack of children's voice in the transition process. Mangione and Speth (1998), however, report on an initiative which united parents and children and Kindergarten and First Grade teachers, through a graduation ceremony in an African American community. Children who were about to make the transition to First Grade were celebrated on this empowering occasion, setting them up for a more auspicious start to their new school environment and in some ways beginning to address (if only in the short term) the shift in power balance during this period of transition. Foucault's work provides a theoretical framework which may enable deeper understanding of power relationships during this time of transition.

3.12 Apprenticeship, Brokerage and Empowerment: Research Evidence

The findings of several research projects support the concept of apprenticeship and brokerage during transition. Australian researchers found that supportive relationships ease the pressures of transition for children who feel insecure and enhance their sense of belonging (Bablett, Barratt-Pugh, Killgallon, and Maloney

2011; Bowes, Harrison, Sweller, Taylor and Neilsen-Hewitt 2009; Grieshaber, 2009). Drawings produced by Australian children in their interviews with Margetts (2006) revealed their memories of starting school and highlighted the importance of friends and more experienced others at times of transition. Fabian's report (2002a) on the playground transition initiative in one English school illustrates the benefits of brokerage for both novices and experts. In this study peer support in playground helped the Reception children who were about to transit to Year One, by giving them the confidence to integrate into whole school playtimes. It gave the Year Two pupils (who acted as playground buddies) confidence and self-esteem. They also enjoyed the responsibility. It would not be unreasonable to infer that the experience was empowering for both parties. In Australia Margetts' (2013) findings suggest that children also have a strong ability to link what they think children should know with what schools can do to help. When gathering the perspectives of 54 children about what new children need to know about school and what they think will help them, for example, the children's responses fell broadly into the categories of peer relationships, rules, general procedures, classrooms, academic skills, emotions and feelings. The children were also able (without much prompting) to suggest a range of solutions which would inform and support the new children in these areas.

The research reviewed in this chapter provides an important and insightful viewpoint of transition. The research has widely sought children perspectives but does not fully explore the potential of the concept of children's 'voice' beyond gathering their perspectives stage. It also stops short of involving them in planning a way forward for transition. This raises questions, exposes gaps and facilitates identification of areas of study that warrant further exploration. The research suggests that for some children the transition from Reception to Year One can evoke feelings of disempowerment. The literature reviewed, however, positions power relations within a complex and unstable field. This indicates the potential

for transitional research to capitalise on the shifting nature of power relations in a way that could benefit the children. This appears to be an area of study which has not been fully investigated. The theoretical framework reviewed in this chapter facilitates exploration of power relationships during infant school transitions from a new perspective and necessitates a research plan that will address the gap. This leads me to clarify

3.13 Reflection and Reflective Practice

In order to defend the value of reflection and reflective practice, Schon (1983: 31) contrasts the approach to 'Technical Rationality'. Technical Rationality is an approach to professional practice that involves trying to establish fixed ways of working (Thompson and Thompson 2008: 14). It supports the notion that theory, or more broadly, knowledge, can be applied directly to practice (ibid). Thompson and Thompson (2008), however, argue that a professional knowledge base rarely, if ever, gives direct practice guidance on what to do and how to do it. If followed rigidly the technical rationality model reduces practitioners to 'the level of technicians whose only role is to implement the research findings and theoretical models of scientists, researchers and theoreticians' (Rolfe, Freshwater and Jasper (2001: 7). Schon (1983) contests that such a way of working does not fit with the reality of professional practice which is often challenging, disordered, and unclear. Rather than seeing professional knowledge as a set of 'one size fits all' solutions, Schon (ibid) perceives professional knowledge to be a set of insights and understandings.

Central to reflective practice are the skills of thinking, analysis and self-awareness (Thompson and Thompson 2008). The process of becoming aware of the knowledge that informs our practice and making it more visible is also significant

(ibid). Schon (1983) believes that a reflective practitioner needs to apply 'professional artistry' in order to establish meaningful links between knowledge base and practice.

A reflective practitioner acts like a skilled tailor, using the knowledge base of his or her profession as the cloth from which to cut appropriate solutions to fit the requirements of the specific practice situation (Thompson and Thompson 2008:15)

Thompson and Thompson 2008) associate reflective practice with 'open' knowledge (knowledge that is explicit, open to scrutiny and challenge and can be improved on or developed over time) as opposed to 'closed' knowledge (knowledge which we acquire without awareness and draw on implicitly) (ibid). Traditional approaches to the relationship between theory and practice often begin with theory and work towards practice (ibid). Reflective practice, however, recognises the relationship between theory (knowing) and practice (doing) as multi-directional, interconnected and equal (ibid).

3.14 The main aim of my research

To develop a theoretical and practical framework for young children who have recently experienced transition to participate in supporting others

3.15 My research objectives

1. To critically analyse young children's perspectives of transition from the Reception to Year One within the context of power/knowledge relationships (*Research Question a and b*)
2. To critically analyse how children's experiences can be used to support new groups of children moving into Year One (*Research Question c and d*)

3. To use considerations of power and knowledge to analyse the theoretical and methodological links between children's participation in research, children's voice and children's perceptions of themselves as experts (*Research Questions b, d and e*)
4. To develop a framework for the participation of 'expert' children in Year One in researching and disseminating ways to support young children facing transition (*Research Question c and d*)

3.16 My research questions

- a. How do children recently transitioned to Year One perceive the ways in which power and knowledge relationships are constructed through the discourse and practices of Year One?
- b. How do the children transform themselves in relation to others through the knowledge produced within power relations, discourse and practices at the time of transition?
- c. How can those who have recently been involved in the transition from Reception to Year One use their recent experience of transition to help to bridge the gap for the next cohort of children?
- d. How can knowledge of the structure of the next stage of learning be used as a tool with which to begin to readdress power imbalances during transition?
- e. How does encouraging Year One children to use their expertise to help others impact on the experts?

Chapter 4. Methodology: Empowering children as researchers

The literature and research reviewed in Chapters Two and Three supported the central aim of my research. My commitment to empowering children as co-researchers and experts in transition implied a methodology of participation in which children were as much researchers as researched, hence this study is set within a qualitative participatory paradigm.

I believe that the children's deep involvement in this research will enable our school to approach transition from an informed starting point. I also believe that the children have the knowledge and expertise to plan a way forward for the Reception to Year One transition which supports other children rather than disempowers them. My commitment to children's voice in the transition process necessitates an exploration of participatory research which will enable me to plan a research design that will meet my research aims. In this chapter I provide detail of my positioning (which undoubtedly affects the methodology and all other areas of the research). I unpick the ethical complexities of participatory research. I also investigate a range of methods and methodology associated with participatory research before formulating my research design.

As my reading and the design for the pilot study developed, I began to reflect more critically on the notion of empowering children as researchers and became aware of the need to clarify and justify my stance and its rationale. In this chapter I first justify the quality of this research, with reference to, and providing evidence of, 'Credibility', 'Transferability', 'Dependability' and 'Confirmability'. I then examine the concept of 'empowerment' and how it has been interpreted by the paradigm of participatory research. Next, I discuss my own ontological and epistemological positioning in relation to this and provide a rationale for the approach used. In the following section I consider the ethical principles and procedures which guided the research. I conclude by providing detail of the research design (including my role in the research and that of the children) and I explore the ethics which particularly relate to the methods.

4.1 Quality Control: Credibility, Transferability, Dependability and Confirmability

In order to assess the quality of this research I drew on my engagement with qualitative research literature, including Cresswell (1998 and 2000) and Lincoln and Guba (1985 and 2000). This literature enabled me to identify the following criteria to support evaluation of the research:

- The appropriateness of the research design for the issues under investigation: How compatible are the contextual setting of the research, the issues being investigated and the inquiry paradigm?
- The usefulness of the research project to the community.
- The rigour, truthfulness and accuracy of the findings.

4.1.1 Appropriateness

Conventional forms of research inquiry are contained within the positivist paradigm, whereby the concept of reality is regarded as a separate entity, peripheral to the researcher and continually static (Lincoln and Guba 1985; Erlandson, Harris, Skipper and Allen 1993). This standpoint works on the assumption that all people experience the world from the same perspective, and thus, the aim of conducting social science research is to learn more about how the world operates so that phenomena can be predicted or controlled. Lincoln and Guba (2000) suggest that such an understanding represents naïve realism.

Critics of the positivism paradigm interpret reality as internally constructed, relative to the individuals involved and fluid. Consequently, as people improve

their knowledge through social engagement they form multiple constructions of reality which alter over time. Hence, whilst the purpose of social science research is to comprehend and restructure the perceptions people originally hold to develop a consensus, the findings from such research are open to further interpretation as knowledge and complexity expands. This ontological assumption underpins the naturalistic inquiry paradigm.

Lincoln and Guba (1985: 260) argue that a naturalistic paradigm is more appropriate for 'for virtually all instances of socio-behavioral inquiry', particularly when the theoretical underpinning supports the inquiry paradigm and the paradigm fits with the focus of the inquiry. With this in mind, I argue that the focus and context of this study, which is to develop a framework of participation by which children's perspectives and experiences of transition can be used to support other children, is compatible to naturalistic inquiry. Thus, the issue under investigation, the context of the study, the theory that underpins the study, and the research paradigm, are well-matched (Lincoln and Guba 1985), achieving a 'state of value resonance' (Agostinho 2005: 6).

My study is underpinned by my strong commitment the children's voice, their right to be listened to and the belief that they have a significant contribution to make to research and to improving transition in our school.

4.1.2 Trustworthiness

In order to demonstrate how trustworthiness was established in this research I draw on Lincoln and Guba's framework (1985) which includes the following criteria:

Credibility: confidence in the 'truth' of the findings

Transferability: showing that the findings have applicability in other contexts

Dependability: showing that the findings are consistent and could be repeated

Fulfilment of the criteria was achieved through a methodology which embraced techniques proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985). These consisted of:

Techniques for establishing credibility: Prolonged Engagement, Persistent Observation, Triangulation, Peer debriefing, Negative case analysis and Member-checking

Techniques for establishing transferability: Thick description

Techniques for establishing dependability: Inquiry audit

Techniques for establishing confirmability: Audit trail, Triangulation and Reflective journal

Prolonged engagement was demonstrated through my engagement as a participant observer throughout the research. Persistent observation was established through the thorough recording of discussions and children's actions as well as field notes produced by myself and my teaching assistant (see p.92).

Triangulation was consistently utilised during the data collection and data analysis phases of this study. During data collection, different types of data were collected, such as discussion transcripts, videos, child-produced resources and researcher and colleague observations (see p.255). Evolving themes were refined and verified during the data analysis using multiple forms of data, for example, my observations of children's resources, actions and emerging themes were triangulated with children's perspectives via frequent discussions. Opportunities to corroborate findings facilitated the production of a more sophisticated construction of knowledge, for example discussions with junior school children

[\(Appendix Thirteen\)](#) and novices (see p.257).

Throughout the research I welcomed opportunities for scrutiny of the project by colleagues, peers and academics. Frequent debriefing sessions with my research supervisory team provided a sounding board to test out my developing ideas and interpretations. Their probing helped me to identify my own preferences, biases and potential issues in the proposed course of action. Knowledgeable and experienced questioning and observations enabled me to consider new or alternative perspectives and theories, refine my methods, develop a greater explanation of the research design and strengthen my arguments. In addition, our meetings facilitated my engagement in negative case analysis (Lincoln and Guba 1985; Miles and Huberman 1994; Silverman 2001) whereby I revisited data to confirm that my constructs accounted for all instances of the phenomenon involved and was, thus, able to refine my hypothesis. Recognising that my closeness to the project inhibited my ability to view it with real detachment, I also invited contributions from the wider academic community. Feedback that was offered to me following my presentations at conferences, for example, presented fresh perspectives that challenged my assumptions.

Member checks were completed frequently with the children throughout the research. Techniques used for member-checking during the data collection stage included verbal discussions to ensure that my interpretations of the data was in line with the children's perspectives, shared reviews of the audio and visual data and child-led discussions about the resources made. The trustworthiness of the data sorting and analysis was also enhanced by enabling the children to identify data themes and encouraging them to sort the data according to their own criteria.

The findings presented in this thesis demonstrate thick description of the phenomenon under scrutiny, cross referenced to and substantiated by the theoretical framework. This helps to convey the particular situations investigated and the contexts that surrounded them to others, thus enabling them to determine the extent to which the overall findings 'ring true'. Using real qualitative experiences to illustrate the defined research themes also enables others to assess how far the defined themes truly embrace the actual situations. Thick description increases the transferability of the methodology and findings to other contexts, so that the approach developed in the research can be used to support transition in the wider community.

Throughout the study I maintained a reflective journal. This provided a chronological historical account of the entire study and a central depository for my reflections, thoughts, ideas and literature references. Process notes relating to methodology, research tools, theme identification, data reduction and data analysis were recorded in my reflective journal. As the research progressed it also became an outlet for my emotions which I used extensively to develop a more nuanced understanding of the children's experiences. My teaching assistant contributed to these understandings, recording her observations and reflections in a separate journal. At the end of each day (if not before) we shared our experiences and thoughts. Her input enabled greater data collection and sometimes alternative perspectives.

An accessible audit trail was established according to Lincoln and Guba's categories of information (1985). Information regarding the research intentions and disposition was documented in the research proposal and personal notes. Raw data was recorded in the form of written field notes, audio and video recordings and children's resources. This final report provides an audit trail of data synthesis, for example, the clustering of themes into categories and

interpretations.

In presenting this justification for the trustworthiness of this research, however, I remain aware that

Naturalistic criteria of trustworthiness are open-ended; they can never be satisfied to such an extent that the trustworthiness of the inquiry could be labelled as unassailable . . . naturalistic inquiry operates as an open system; no amount of member checking, triangulation, persistent observation, auditing, or whatever can ever compel; it can at best persuade

(Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 329)

Furthermore, Erlandson et al. (1993: 151) contend that, because naturalistic inquiry takes its strength from the separate realities that are constructed by different individuals, 'trustworthiness is not sufficient as a measure of quality in a naturalistic study'. In order for a naturalistic researcher to claim 'authenticity' (ibid), therefore, separate realities must be given prominence in the lives of individuals, in the contexts in which they operate, and in all reporting of the inquiry. From this perspective, I argue that, through deep engagement with the children, I enabled authenticity throughout the study.

Shulman (1997: 6) proposes that 'research begins in wonder and curiosity but ends in teaching'. In order for the research to be meaningful and consequential, therefore, the research account should lead to a process in which the researcher teaches what they have learned to their peers in the community. This dictates that the findings from a qualitative research study should be communicated in such a way that they can be understood by others and the research product, particularly in educational research, should further human understanding, 'so that the quality of educational practice can be improved' (Barone and Eisner, 1997, p. 85).

The research premise for this study was to further my understanding of transition and develop a practical, theoretical and transferable model by which expert children could use their experiences of transition to support other children. This knowledge is reported in depth in this thesis. In addition, the research has been, and will continue to be, communicated to the wider community of education through numerous presentations and written articles.

In summary, I defend the 'quality' of this research for the following reasons. Firstly, the research design enabled flexibility and permitted the issues to unfold within a naturalistic setting, hence, it was congruent with the research focus. Secondly, the trustworthiness criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability was methodically applied throughout the research via the following techniques: prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, member checks, providing thick descriptions, compiling an audit trail and the maintenance of a reflective journal. Authenticity was also demonstrated through the consistently open dialogue that occurred between me and the children. Thus, through the establishment of this trustworthiness and authenticity, rigour was achieved. Thirdly, the gaps identified and questions raised in my review of existing research and knowledge relating to transition justifies that this research represents a useful contribution to transition practice and theory (see p.111).

4.2 International perspectives of children's rights

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC 1989) is a legally binding international agreement setting out the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of every child, regardless of their race, religion or abilities. Under the terms of the convention, governments are required to meet children's basic needs and help them reach their full potential. Central to this is the acknowledgment that every child has basic fundamental rights. These include

the right to:

- Life, survival and development
- Protection from violence, abuse or neglect
- An education that enables children to fulfil their potential
- Be raised by, or have a relationship with, their parents
- Express their opinions and be listened to.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC 1989: Article 12) declares that all children who are capable of forming their own views have a right to express those views freely in matters that affect them. Article 13 states children's right to freedom of expression via their own choice of media (ibid).

Since it was adopted by the United Nations in November 1989, 194 countries have signed up to the UNCRC. The UNCRC was ratified by the United Kingdom in 1991. All countries that sign up to the UNCRC are bound by international law to ensure it is implemented. This is monitored by the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

4.3 Children's Voice

The origin of the phrase 'children's voice' is uncertain (Flutter 2007).

Educationalists use the phrase interchangeably with the phrases 'student voice' and 'pupil voice'. The *Glossary of Education Reform* defines 'student voice' as:

The values, opinions, beliefs, perspectives, and cultural backgrounds of individual children and groups of children in a school, and to instructional approaches and techniques that are based on children's choices, interests, passions, and ambitions (Great Schools Partnership 2013)

Student voice was foregrounded by the *United Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UNCRC 1989) in 1989. Since then the phrase 'student voice' has become

widely used in education literature and generally applied to strategies which enable pupils to discuss their views on school matters (Arnot et al. 2004). Flutter (2007) positions pupil voice within the broader principle of pupil participation (a phrase which encompasses strategies to enable children's active involvement in decision making within school).

The discourse of student voice contains emotive vocabulary such as agency, participation, independence, emancipation and empowerment (ibid). Children and young people's right to have their opinions heard has become a goal for many in the field of education and academic research (Kraft 2013). Teachers and researchers alike take up the mantra, pressing for greater participation whilst openly acknowledging that children's 'voice' or 'agency' rarely come without adult-imposed limits (ibid). Instances of high quality 'listening' to children are juxtaposed with some tokenistic gestures to student voice (Kraft 2013).

Internationally there are varying interpretations of what 'student voice' and 'pupil participation' should look like in schools. In Denmark, for example, there is a government led focus on democratic schools, where student voice is seen as an integral right for children and young people (Kerr et al. 2002). In England, some elements of pupil consultation and pupil participation have been integrated into policy and guidance (Flutter 2007). The *Every Child Matters* (DCSF 2003) manifesto, for example, stresses the importance of consulting children and young people. Ofsted (2005) inspection guidelines require schools to listen to children's views. Flutter (2007: 345), however, points out that top-down approaches which attempt to 'enforce change through external pressure' can lead teachers to overlook the simple fact that student voice enables teachers to refocus their attention on what is important – the learners and how they learn. It also encourages teachers to explore and reflect on what happens in the classroom and is, thus, an important catalyst for change (Rudduck and Flutter, 2003).

Komulainen (2007: 23) considers voice to be social and co-constructed instead of individual, fixed, straightforward, linear and clear. Consequently, it is impossible to capture the authenticity of 'voice' through people's words (MacLure 2009). Children's voices, in particular, are constantly constrained and shaped by multiple factors such as adult assumptions about children, specific use of language, the institutional structures in which they operate and the overall ideological and discursive climates which prevail (Komulainen 2007). They are always 'situated and variable' (Spyrou 2015: 156). It is important to consider, therefore, the complexity and interplay of values and interests in everyday social processes and local decision making; how children's voices are produced within specific institutional contexts and how particular institutional contexts produce certain voices rather than others (Clarke and Percy-Smith 2006; Spyrou 2015; Punch, 2002).

All reporting of children's voices is a situated and interested representation (Holland 2001). This leads James (2007) to question why researchers do not reflect critically on their role in the process of representing children's voices through their work. At the very least, there is a need to recognise how adult status impacts on the research process and, hence, on the production of children's voices (Leonard 2007; Kim 2015). This question has particular political significance when the research seeks to destabilise power differentials between children and adults by relying on the authenticity of voice whilst aiming to empower children (Spyrou 2011), as is the case in this research.

Mannion (2007) calls for a reflexive critique and reframing of current discourse around listening to children. This invites a problematising approach to the notion of student voice (Fielding 2007) and greater self-scrutiny of research which makes claims to student voice and the way in which their voices are represented (Spyrou 2011). It is important to explore the limits of children's voices by reflecting on the research contexts in which children's voices are produced, the processes by which

they are produced and the power imbalances that shape them (Spyrou 2015).

Critics of student voice in relation to classroom reforms suggest that only the more confident and articulate children have their voices heard (MacBeth et al. 2003). MacBeth et al (2003: 42) found evidence that children who are 'more articulate in the language of school' often shape the decisions of their peers and are more likely to have their opinions recognised by the teachers. This can leave other children feeling ironically 'disenfranchised within initiatives specifically designed to empower them'. Thus, the consultation process can sometimes 'reflect rather than challenge existing divisive practices in schools' (ibid: 42). Furthermore, Arnot et al. (2003) argue that teachers can gain more by listening to the views of lower achieving, less articulate children because these are the children who are most likely to have difficulty with current classroom practice. The implication is that student voice strategies need to encourage and facilitate the widest possible range of voices to be heard (Sutherland 2006) and student voice and student participation in schools 'needs to be part of a collaborative ethos that embraces all members of the school community' (ibid: 8).

Another concern raised by Flutter (2007) is that an overemphasis on student voice can silence teacher voice, undermine teachers' authority and 'fundamentally change the power relationships that exist within schools' (p.350). Rudduck and Flutter (2003) affirm that within the pejorative climate of education, teachers may be concerned that student consultation may expose critiques of them or their practice. Studies which have included student voice, however, have found that there is often a consensus between the views of the children and the views of their teachers (ibid).

4.4 Shades of Empowerment

4.2.1 Participatory Appraisal Methodology

Theoretical perspectives relating to empowerment have been explored through 'Participatory Appraisal' methodologies. Participatory appraisal is a family of approaches and methods which enable communities to share, develop and analyse their own knowledge of life and conditions in their immediate context (Chambers 1992). Researchers and practitioners who operate within a participatory appraisal paradigm aim to make visible the least powerful voices in a community in order to bring about change (for example Johnson, Gordan, Pridmore and Scott 1998; Hart 1997). Their work is based on the assumption that local people have the most authentic knowledge of living in their community, but their voices are not always encouraged or heard. Specific participatory appraisal techniques (such as verbal and visual tools) have been developed to readdress this imbalance. These techniques empower local people to conduct their own modes of investigation. This enables their communities to plan and act on their own outcomes (Chambers 1992) and thus develop more community-based solutions (Sellers 1997).

4.2.2 Children's Participation in Research

Sociological perspectives of the child as a competent social actor (Mayall 2002), rather than passive and in need, suggest that the principles of participatory appraisal are equally applicable to children. Yet the views of young children are often disregarded by members of the 'academy', for example, adult researchers and policy makers (Murray 2016: 705). Murray (2012; 2013; 2016; 2017) conceptualises ways in which young children engage in research behaviors, such as exploration, problem solving and decision making, during everyday activities. She presents a strong case for repositioning young children 'away from the

margins of research to an intrinsic position in research concerning matters that affect them' (Murray 2017:224). This places an emphasis on exploring children's perceptions of their lives, interests, priorities and concerns (Christensen and James 2000) and the development of a 'listening pedagogy' (Clark 2002). Some critics question if the communities concerned genuinely benefit from the participatory appraisal approach (Cooke and Kothari 2001). Young children, however, are 'best served by changes to policy and practice which remain alert to their differing perspectives and interests as well as their needs' (Clark et al. 2003: 48).

Numerous authors have made reference to the diversity of interpretations that have become allied with participatory research and student voice (Connolly 2008; Fleming and Boeck 2012; Hunleth 2011). Mannion (2007) asserts that these interpretations need to be disentangled. Kim (2015) points out that evolving ideals and standpoints relating to children's participation in research are not always supported by a bank of evidence regarding their impact and effectiveness. By comparing research with children to that with adults there is a danger of bracketing all children together as a group in opposition to adults and overlooking diversity among children (Punch 2002). Tisdall (2012), in particular, urges researchers to re-examine the true benefits of research with children, implying that the 'research by children' rhetoric may not always reflect the reality and impact of practice. Kim (2015) and Kellett (2011) draw attention to the ambiguity of approaches which claim to empower children as researchers.

4.2.3 Imbalances of Power and the Rhetoric of Empowerment

Critiques of the naïve ways in which participatory research is sometimes actioned (Gallacher and Gallagher 2008) include references to power and exploitation (James 2007; Kellett 2005). Research by children is often presented as a move

towards children's empowerment (Mason and Hood 2011; Kellett 2011; Coppock 2011). Engaging young people as researchers, however, is not necessarily a solution to their marginalisation (Schafer and Yarwood 2008). In his examination of political language, Edelman (1977) shows how policy discourse can be susceptible to inconsistent interpretations leading to its misuse. The rhetoric of participatory research does not always equate to practice (Badham 2004; Tisdall 2012) and the concept of 'empowering' children through their involvement in research is one aspect of this discourse that is increasingly being placed under scrutiny (Coppock 2011; Bragg 200; Komulainen 2007; Kim 2015 and others).

Troyna (1994) argues that popular terms like 'empowerment' can be appropriated and reshaped by governing authorities to present a rationale for social and educational policy. He also provides exemplifications of the way in which governments have used empowerment rhetoric to encourage or mask political movements or agendas. Part of the problem may be that the terms 'student voice' and 'empowerment' have become interchangeable with a lack of clear distinction between the two.

The power imbalance between experienced adult researchers and child researchers cannot be ignored (Connolly 2008). Research that is initiated by adults is inevitably influenced or even steered by adult perspectives and agendas (Kim 2015; Bucknall 2009). Power differences are more prominent in child-adult research than other research due to the way in which socially sanctioned adult responsibilities towards children shape the encounters (Spyrou 2015).

Bhavnani (1988) alleges that researchers who attempt to camouflage power inequalities in their research within a backdrop of authenticity and voice produce stereotypes of the subjects they research, thus contributing to their disempowerment. Student voice is no longer seen as a 'radical gesture that will necessarily challenge educational hierarchies' (Bragg 2007: 343) and the notion

that children's emancipation can be achieved through their participation in research is progressively contested as naïve (Coppock (2011)).

Komulainen (2007) questions if listening to children in social research is truly empowering or merely a rhetorical manoeuvre. It has been suggested, for example, that the rhetoric of 'voice' as a concept provides a 'valuable legitimating tool' by which governing bodies can divert attention away from 'increasingly aggravated social inequalities' (Arnot and Reay 2007: 311). Troyna (1994) suggests that 'enabling' may be a more appropriate or realistic term than 'empowerment'. Children's participation in adult directed research programmes, however, may represent political management of children's rights claims (Hendrick 2003). It may mask hidden agendas to facilitate 'adult progressivism' (Bragg 2007). It could also be interpreted as an 'additional mechanism of control' (Fielding 2001: 100). Alderson (2008), for example, interrogates whether some teachers' agendas and rationales for involving children in research are more associated with learning potential than participation rights and empowerment. The authentic intention of this research, however, is to involve the children deeply in research in order to improve the transitional outcomes for other children. In my research there is no hidden agenda.

4.2.4 Governmentality and Filtered Voices

Foucault's theory of governmentality and participation (Foucault 1991) provides an interesting framework by which to examine the concept of empowerment within state-controlled environments such as school. In Foucault's terms government refers to strategies, programmes and techniques which seek to standardise behaviour (Rose 1999). Within modern society, these systems have become more subtle and less visible (Bragg 2007). Rather than exercising overt collective control over groups in society, Governments have become more adept to asserting their power at an individual level (ibid).

Utilising the fashionable belief that society is made up of autonomous individuals, Governments increasingly exert their power by manipulating the 'technologies of the self' (Foucault 1988). Hence, individuals are encouraged to adopt a practice of 'self-subjectification' (Triantaillou and Nielson 2001: 65) through which they critique themselves (Masschelein and Quaghebeur 2005). Positioning children as researchers creates a new form of policing in which students become their own critics (Bragg 2007: 352). This standardises children as responsible individuals whilst developing their respect for education and learning. Consequently, participatory initiatives have the capacity to narrow children's identities as well as expand them. The freedom that children are afforded through their participation in research generally takes place within a specific disciplinary framework. The approach fosters commitment thus creating a new form of domination (Bragg 2007).

Corsaro and Molinari (2000) and Christensen and James (2000) demonstrate how children can actively interpret and shape the research process, as well as being influenced by the actions and interactions of others. Children's lives, however, are interdependent with those of adults (Mannion 2007). Their voices are filtered and generally mirror (rather than challenge) adult perspectives. This creates an 'illusion of participation whilst maintaining current structural relations' (Coppock 2011: 444). Given the power of adult agendas, 'having a say' falls short of accomplishing effective and meaningful participation' for children (Clarke and Percy-Smith 2006: 2) and, thus, may be perceived as patronising. Authentic child emancipation, Coppock (2011) argues, can only be achieved through structural change which encompasses adult/child power relationships across the wider social, political and economic context.

4.2.5 Voice and the Power of Participatory Research

Bradbury-Jones and Taylor (2015) contest that (notwithstanding the approach's challenges) participatory research with children is a powerful conduit for children's voice which can encourage greater commitment to student voice across other disciplines. The potential to increase children's confidence (Alderson 2001; Lundy and McEvoy 2012; Schafer and Yarwood 2008); develop their skills of critical thinking (Kellett 2006) and encourage their sense of empowerment (Lundy, McEvoy and Bryne 2011) are amongst those benefits celebrated in a body of literature. Pertinent to this research it is also contended that children's understandings of their worlds and sub-cultures result in rich insights (Kellett et al. 2004) which can ultimately improve outcomes (Lundy et al. 2011).

Gallacher and Gallagher (2008) point out that children are experts in their own lives, but not the only experts. Progression towards childhood emancipation, therefore, calls for 'meaningful alliances' between adults and children, rather than handing over complete responsibility to one or other (Coppock 2008: 445). Kim (2015), however, argues that in research that is initiated and managed by adults it is inevitable that children will be influenced by adult perspectives, agendas and values, thus leaving adults securely in power. It is, therefore, imperative that researchers acknowledge the subordinated role of children to adults in the research encounter (Mayall 2000). Foucault's power theories explore more productive aspects of power. From a Foucauldian perspective, liberty depends on the presence of power relations. This allows for the acknowledgement that student voice initiatives can be effective in fostering particular aptitudes (Bragg 2007). Arnot and Reay (2007: 311) advocate a reconceptualisation of voice, not to its demise. In this research the children shape the methodology with their own ideas. Charlie, for example, devised a method via which new children could guide themselves around their new classroom ([see p.255](#)) and Polly and Clare used puppetry to inform the new children about Year One ([see p.246](#)).

Mannion (2007) urges researchers not to lose sight of their own ontological and epistemological values when planning and implementing their research. My commitment to children's rights to participation and voice are central to my pedagogy and research, as is the desire to improve transition from Reception to Year One in my school. There are several principles which support the notion of involving children in researching issues which directly affect them within the sphere of education. Children have a unique perspective of matters which are important to them (Clark and Moss, 2005). They are experts on their own lives (Langsted 1994). This establishes children as principal stakeholders in educational policy and practice (Tolfree and Woodhead 1999). Their perspectives in the critique and reform of education are relevant and important (Cook-Sather 2002). However, the educational system often perceives children to be unreliable informants about their own lives and incapable of making judgements about matters that affect them. This means that their voices are rarely given the credit they deserve (Qvortrup 2004).

A constructivist view of learning acknowledges young children as active participants in their own learning (Clark and Moss 2005), thereby placing importance on young perspectives of the process of learning (Brooker 2002; Carr 2000; MacNaughton 2003). This places children in the role of interpreters within the research process (Clark and Moss 2005). In order for children to identify with a school or teacher's ways of seeing they need to have their own understandings, representations and perspectives of the world recognised (Brooker 2002). 'Using methods that emphasise children's meaning-making and ways of seeing, practitioners have a more informed starting point for supporting children's learning' (Clark and Moss 2005: 83).

Traditional transition programmes often centre upon a community of practice

wherein the teacher or other adults attempt to 'bridge the gap' by conveying information and supporting new children. The way in which children are viewed by society, however, is evolving (James and Prout 1990; Qvortrup 1994). *The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UN 2005) categorically positions all children, including very young children, as 'right holders' (Lundy, McEnvoy and Byrne 2011: 715). This includes the right to be respected, protected and fulfilled. In particular, Article 12 (UN 2005 para 5) recognises that children have the right and ability to participate freely in society (Freeman 1996). They have the right to express their views and this right should be 'anchored in the child's daily life....including through research and consultation' (UN 2009 para 14). As a result, children's active participation in research is now considered by many to be a preferred methodological approach (Tisdall 2012; Thomson and Gunter 2006; Powell and Smith 2009; Kellett, Forrest, Dent and Ward 2004; Bradbury-Jones and Taylor 2015).

Children are potentially more vulnerable to unequal power relationships in research than other groups (Robinson and Kellett 2004; Punch 2002). The imbalance of power that exists between adults and children during a period of transition is a particular concern of my research. One way of addressing these imbalances is to enable children to take back some control of the transition process (Clark and Moss, 2005) and involve them in research into transition (Dockett and Perry 1999). An added advantage to involving the main 'stakeholders' (Titman 1994) in this particular research process is that, through their involvement, the experienced *stakeholders* will begin to support the novice *stakeholders* as they became participants in the school *community of practice*.

Ashton (2008) stresses the importance of listening to children's voices at times of transition. I believe that the children are best positioned to create a 'living picture' (Clark and Moss 2001/2005) of the transition process in my school. Ultimately, I

hope to use 'the views of children as a guide to action' (Borland 2001) which will improve the transition process in our school. Adults who are prepared to recognise children as 'meaning makers in their own lives' (Lundy et al. 2011: 716), challenge traditional assumptions of children's capacities and provide meaningful opportunities that enable children to demonstrate and develop their capabilities as researchers (UN 2009 para 135).

4.2.6 Insider Perspectives: Children as Experts

The benefits of insider perspectives in childhood research are plentiful. Children's understanding of their worlds and sub-cultures enriches childhood research (Kellett et al. 2004). Recent, relevant and first-hand experience positions children as experts in their immediate context which can support their adult co-researchers (Lundy and McEvoy 2012). This tips the balance of power in their favour (Lundy et al. 2012). Insider perspectives can generate more appropriate research questions (Schafer and Yarwood 2008). Peer research breaks down inter-generational barriers and can ensure access to children's sub-cultures (Kellett et al. 2004). Shared understandings between child researchers and researched peers can earn confidence and lead to more meaningful discussions (Alderson 2001). Children may be more successful in obtaining responses from their peers than adults because power and generational issues within peer relationships are generally less intense as those related to adult-child relationships (Kellett 2010). Findings that are based on children's experiences and perspectives, rather than adults' interpretations of children's perspectives are generally more reliable (Lundy et al. 2011).

There are inevitably some disadvantages to insider perspectives. Connections and shared understandings cannot be guaranteed, and young children are not always open to differing views (Kellett 2011). Confidence in their own expertise may

compromise a researcher's position as an 'enquiring outsider' (Alderson 2001: 40), whilst an assumed identification with the research participants may destabilise the rigour of research (Bradbury-Jones and Taylor 2015). Engaging children as co-researchers alters the dynamics of power but cannot eliminate them (Kellett 2011). Child researchers hold a position of power over child participants, however, the dynamics of power amongst peers are sometimes overlooked (Schafer and Yarwood 2008). Articulate or dominant children can control research agendas (Kellett 2010). Hierarchical relationships and sub-cultures can filter or arbitrate children's voices throughout the research process, for example during interviews and findings dissemination (Lomax 2012). Critical evaluation of insider perspectives may conclude that this approach represents a deliberate manoeuvre to evade disempowerment and a conduit for children's voice but cannot lay claims to complete empowerment or freedom of voice. Contrasts between the reality and fiction of empowering young children, however, cannot be ignored. A more realistic approach to participatory research, therefore, may be to review research aims from a perspective of 'shades of empowerment', rather than 'either/or' and to develop a pedagogical stance which avoids disempowering children, rather than striving for complete empowerment.

4.3 Participatory Methodology

When devising a methodology for this study I took inspiration from the Mosaic Approach (Clark and Moss 2001). As its name suggests, the Mosaic Approach draws together different sources of data to create a complete picture of children's perspectives (Bertram and Pascal 2009). Within its multi-method framework, the Mosaic Approach combines participatory tools (photography, tours, mapping, drawing and role-play) with more traditional methods (observation and interviews) (Clark 2001).

This study is in keeping with the Mosaic Approach in so much as it:

- Acknowledges and facilitates the different ways in which children communicate (Multi-modal)
- Recognises children as experts in their own lives (participatory)
- Encourages research participants to reflect on meanings
- Focuses on children's lived experiences
- Is embedded in early year practice
- Is adaptable
- Uses young children's perspectives as a starting point

My ontological positioning is similar to Clark and Moss's (2005) in so much as it is underpinned by the assumption that children are reliable experts in their own lives who are capable of making informed judgements about matters that affect them. I am committed to children's empowerment through participatory research. I concur with Clark and Moss (2001: 333) assertion that:

The greater the diversity of methods with different learning styles used then the more opportunity children will have to find new ways of thinking, of looking at the same question in a variety of ways

I am encouraged by Murray's (2013) 'Jigsaw' methodology, which combines some elements of the Mosaic Approach with other methodologies in order to create a new methodology.

Unlike the Mosaic Approach, which encourages participants to use predetermined research methods (such as, cameras, mapping, discussion groups), this study is

reflexive to the ideas of the research participants. The methodology, therefore, is shaped by the participants as the study progresses.

It is imperative that the ethics of my ontological, epistemological and pedagogical positioning are equivalent to the ethics of my research. This requires closer scrutiny of the tensions surrounding participatory research and research methodology.

4.3.1 Ethical Principles: Avoiding Disempowerment

The ethics of participatory research for young children is positioned within a transitional climate in which updated perspectives of childhood and childrens' entitlements compete with traditional beliefs and attitudes (James and Prout 1990; Qvortrup 1994; UNCRC 1989). Adult researchers' ethical responsibilities are not diminished by engaging children as co-researchers, they are intensified (Bradbury-Jones et al. 2015). Initiatives which aim to promote children's participation in research are guided by obligations to the ethical conduct of interactions with children; appreciation of children's rights as participants in research and consultation; and an ethical responsibility to the reliable representation of children's perspectives (Dockett, Einarsdottir and Perry 2012).

O'Neill (2014: 219) discusses the need for 'empathetic consideration of research ethics from the position of the child'. Encouraging a child-centric approach to educational research on the grounds that an agentic view of children's research participation may in turn facilitate more authentic 'student voice' methodologies' (ibid). Ethical Symmetry (Christensen and Prout 2002) positions the ethical relationship between researcher and participants as a starting point for participatory research. Ethical issues are different for research with children and the position a researcher takes is to a certain extent dependent on their

perspective of children and childhood (Thomas and O’Kane 1998). In this research a solid foundation of ethical values and practices affords me the flexibility to be responsive to localised research encounters as the research unfolds and to rely on my own personal judgement in my everyday ethical practice (O’Neill 2014).

During the resource making process, for example, Matthew took photographs of the Reception and Year One classrooms in order to construct a ‘spot the difference’ activity. Matthew’s photos contained images of his peers, however, I considered them to be powerful research evidence. Hence, I was faced with a procedural dilemma: I could avoid using them in my findings altogether or I could anonymise them by blurring the faces of the children that had been photographed. Hughes (2012) discusses similar issues in research using visual methods. I concurred with Hughes (*ibid.*) that anonymising the photos would minimise their power and value as research evidence and would, thus be counterproductive. Avoiding using them altogether, however, would mean that I was negating an important piece of evidence. Weighing up the possibilities and exercising my own personal judgement, I chose to make reference to the photos in my research findings ([see p.193](#)) but not present them. Whilst this measure decreased their value in my report, I believe that my decision represented the best possible compromise. Making reference to the photographs without presenting them, however, exposed another ethical tension. Hughes (2012) draws attention to tensions that arise when research participants request that their contributions be personally recognised. Matthew was disappointed that visual images of his resource did not appear in the findings when many of his peers’ resources did. In order to overcome this predicament, I explained to Matthew, in very simple terms, the notion of confidentiality and why I was not able to include his photographs in the final report. This explanation was acceptable to Matthew, but the situation once again alerted me to the complexity of research ethics (Hughes 2012).

Also, during the pre-presentation stage of the study, I encountered another ethical tension. The children's resources were all valuable in their own right. They were representative of a broad range of individual ideas and a considerable amount of hard work. Some resources had been made over the course of several days. The children quite rightly proud of their results. Due to the word count and space confinements of the study report, however, it was necessary to omit some of the evidence from my write up. The selection process required me to carefully evaluate each resource in respect of the contribution it would make to my research aims, objectives and questions. I also wanted to ensure that my report demonstrated the broadness of methods the children had chosen. Although I was careful to include a range of methodologies and evidence, I was mindful that some children's work would not be included in the final report. In order to minimise disappointment, I suggested to the children that we hold a showcase exhibition of the research. This was held at the end of the summer term. The children decided how to display their resources. In the role of expert/researcher, they then presented them to teachers across the school, the school governors and their families.

Morrow and Richards assert that power imbalances between children and adults represent 'the biggest ethical challenge' (1996: 98) for researchers who work with children. Being willing to scrutinise the understandings of power and relationships at play in research involving children leads inevitably and inexorably to the position that undertaking 'voice' research with young people ought, for adults at least, to be a profoundly 'unsettling experience' (O'Neill 2014: 230). Connolly (2008) refers to some of the ethical, methodological and practical problems that can arise during research with children. For example, two of the principal reasons why adults conduct empirical research in education are to understand the phenomenon of education better and to improve educational provision and experience for those involved (O'Neill 2014).

Participatory research sometimes claims empowerment by moving participants' positioning beyond simply taking part to a position of knowing that their actions are taken note of and may be acted on (Boyden and Ennew 1997). Not all educational research, however, is intended to be of immediate or direct benefit to the child participants. Children's participation in such research, therefore, requires consideration of other ethical justifications (ibid). O'Neill (2014) suggests that, in deciding what is worth investigating, and how, and expecting children to follow adult research agendas, researchers totally undermine children's capabilities. Working from a theoretical perspective which examines relationships of power, it is pertinent to consider questions such as who will be the beneficiaries of the research will benefit from the research, what positions will be excluded and what new possibilities are there available (Loveridge and Cornforth 2014). In this research the children's positioning is moved beyond simply taking part to a position of knowing that their perspectives and actions are, not only listened to, but also acted upon. They are able to influence the research and the experiences of other children directly and observe first-hand the impact of their participation in the research.

The pressures of time often prevent researchers in the field of participatory research from building a close rapport with child co-researchers. This, in turn, excludes them from the 'deeper layers' of children's voices (Spyrou 2014: 156). One of the benefits of engaging my own class as co-researchers is my relationship with the children. An in-depth knowledge of them as individuals enables me to access and evaluate different and more complex understandings of their perspectives. On occasions these may contradict their initially articulated voices. It is important, therefore, to remain mindful of the fact that children's voices are peripatetic, complex and do not always equate to their truth (Lather 2009).

Another aspect of this research which supports my understanding of the children's perspectives is my own parallel journey of transition. Elfer and Dearnley (2007) suggest that practitioners who are alert to their own personal experiences and well-being and take time to develop an understanding of their own emotional responses are more attuned to how children feel in difficult situations and are consequently better able to support children's personal, social and emotional development. Processing one's own feelings and reflecting on how they may be evoked when supporting children necessitates time, space and opportunities. Elfer et al. (2007) suggest that it also requires specialised and targeted training. I believe that my unusual positioning enables me to use my own experiences to relate to what the children are saying and doing and is, thus, a valuable research tool which is worthy of the investment. My journey, therefore, is an important part of my reflexive methodology and part of the triangulated process which enabled me to answer my research questions.

Thomas (2009) suggests that the purpose and nature of the research (coupled with researcher 'positionality' and ethical principles) directly influences the choice of research approach and methods. The main aim of my research is to analyse young children's perspectives about the transition from Reception to Key Stage One and how they experienced it within the context of power-knowledge relationships in order that the children's experiences can be used to support others.

The human aspect of my research questions and my deep rooted interest in the people involved and the way they interrelated, indicate that quantifiable data is unlikely to gather the kind of 'thick description' that will enable me to find out what transition is really like for the children (Geertz 1975). I also want to select the best tools for the job without compromising the principles of *Every Child*

Matters (DCSF 2003), upon which my teaching and my school's transition programme is based. These tools need to be sensitive to the values and principles which underpin the success of the phenomenon I want to investigate. I have decided to establish a context of 'multiple listening' which will enable me to gain a more detailed understanding of transition from the children's perspective.

Kellett (2011) and Spyrou (2014) highlight two strands of participatory research which afford children different levels of power and control: research projects which engage children as co-researchers (working alongside adults in some stages of adult led research) and research projects which engage children as primary researchers (actively involved in all stages of the research, including identifying the questions). Alderson (2008) asserts that involving children in all stages of research is crucial to fully respecting their rights and best interests. Researchers are increasingly challenged to place control over every stage of participatory research projects in the hands of the children, including the formulation of research questions (Kellett et al. 2004), data collection (Coad and Evans 2008), data analysis (Coad and Evans 2008) and presentation of findings (Tisdall 2008).

Research questions and agendas which are determined by children highlight different concerns and priorities and offer new perspectives on childhood from an insider perspective (Kellett 2010). Kim (2015), however, suggests that the paradigm of participatory research with children includes many variants between these two strands. Payler (2015) illustrates the continuum of power and control in participatory research in her table (table 4.1).

← Child
Locus of Control
Adult →

	Children as researchers	Children as co-researchers with adults	Children as participants in 'open-ended research' by adults	Children as expert reference groups to adult-led research	Children as participants in 'closed-purpose research' by adults
Outline	Children are trained in research methods by adults; Children set own research agendas (within parameters of adult guidance, depending on age/experience of children); Children use own research processes to conduct own research studies; Children report on own research findings; Adults as facilitators for child-researchers.	Children co-construct research agendas and questions with adults; Children contribute to determining research methods; Children are key research participants, seeking and contributing to data; Children may contribute to presentation of findings; Adult/child research facilitated throughout by adult co-researchers.	Exploratory research by adults with aim of eliciting matters of importance to children within broad themes and children's perspectives on them; Adults use children's perspectives to further shape research questions; Adults seek ways to give 'voice' to children's experiences through multiple methods; Adult researchers seeking to research children's experiences sensitively.	Child reference groups are consulted to influence adult research agendas; Children comment on appropriateness of methods, findings and reporting procedures; Adult researchers seek guidance, trialling and legitimation for their research from children.	Adult sets research agenda, questions and approach; Children's views or experiences are sought as data on closely defined topics or questions within tightly controlled inclusion/exclusion parameters; Adult researchers seek reliable and valid data from children.

Table 4.1 *Payler's continuum of children's engagement with research* (Payler 2015)

Payler's continuum of children's engagement with research (ibid) echoes Fieldings' 'Levels of Student involvement in school self-review and improvement' which positions student voice on a continuum (Fielding 2001). Rather than focusing on the extremes of participation and non-participation these models represent a graded perspective of participation with clear paths to progression.

Children's participation in this research project begun after the project objectives and design had been construed. It could be argued, however, that enabling the children to consciously influence the direction of the research and make decisions about its dissemination develops the participatory nature of the research beyond a superficial level of participation via 'user-friendly' research tools (Thomas and O'Kane 1998).

Morrow and Richards suggest that respect for children's competencies 'needs to become a methodological technique in itself' (1996: 100). Alderson (1995), however, contests that appropriate and efficient methods are imperative to ethical research and methodological soundness may improve the ethics of research. This implies that ethical assessment should include scrutiny of the

research questions, their merit and whether the methods are an effective way of obtaining answers to the questions (Alderson 1995). The reliability and validity of this research is enhanced by an approach which affords children control over the research process and methods and is considerate to children's ways of relating to their world. This makes it ethically acceptable (Thomas and O'Kane 1998; O'Neill 2004).

Farrell (2005) discusses participatory methods which claim to encourage children's voice. Numerous researchers have adopted creative methods in order to facilitate the approach with young children (including Balen, Hlroyd, Mountain and Wood 2001; Christensen and James 2008; Clark 2005a, 2005b; Clark and Moss 2001; Dockett, Einarsdottir and Perry 2011; Evans and Fuller 1996; Jans 2004; Sargeant and Harcourt 2012). Models of ethical participation, however, do not always reflect ethical research with children (Palaiologou 2013). Methods which purport to facilitate participation can become didactic (Gallacher and Gallagher 2008). Palaiologou (2013) contests that a pre-occupation with methods for involving children (rather than methods which reflect the aims and nature of the research) has resulted in an oversimplification of the paradigm. The discourse of children's voice can lead to a narrow and prescribed model for listening which fails to recognise the multiplicity of the issue (Kjorholt, Moss and Clark 2005). In this research, however, the children chose how to represent their diverse voices resulting in a fluid and broad model of listening.

My authentic commitment to children's participation in research requires me to 'problematise' the paradigm through a process of continuous reflection and critique (Palaiologou 2013: 689). The danger of focusing on techniques or models rather than a commitment to working with children is that 'participation' research can lack rigour and depth and, thus, become tokenistic (Mohan 2001). Research practice does not always reflect theory and rationales are not always derived from

the theoretical approach (Palaiologou 2013). Ethical research, however, is dependent on the interplay between what is done and theory (ibid). Tuck (2007) describes a process of 'theorising back' in participatory research whereby questions are shaped by the researcher's intention to achieve participation for children and respect for their voices (ibid). In order that my methods facilitate (rather than limit) participation in this research, therefore, I consider my methodology alongside my ethical commitment and practices (Palaiologou 2013). My ethical commitment encourages me to look further than procedural measures (such as those taken to ensure consent and protection) to more complex issues (such as how I can facilitate relationships between children and adults and how I can limit 'asymmetric' power relations). True ethical practice is 'concerned with research with young children as a whole (methodology) over parts (methods)' (Palaiologou 2013: 695). My ethical standpoint, therefore, underpins all aspects of my research, rather than being just a discrete part of a research project (Palaiologou 2013).

Hart (1992) and Shier (2001) describe a hierarchical approach to participation and ethical practice with young children. Using methods that are beyond the capabilities of children can disempower them further. In this research, however, acknowledging the limitations that are embedded in participatory research with young children, rather than focusing on hierarchical models, enables me to link theory and practice and, thus, to recognise that the 'causality' between adults and children is what is important (Palaiologou 2013: 696). This leads to more ethically respectful research. These considerations helped me to plan a research design that is compatible to the ethical values of my paradigm. Affording the children a choice over how they participate in the research is important to the principles of my research and in keeping with the theoretical framework which guided my study (Thomas and O'Kane 1998). Within the overall themes of the research, I provided opportunities for children to choose what research instruments they

used and encouraged them to develop their own roles and responsibilities in supporting transition for the newcomers. Many of the children chose to use skills and techniques which they had already practised. This gave them confidence and established them as experts from the onset, thereby avoiding feelings of disempowerment which novices in research sometimes experience. One of the findings of my research was that, over a period of time, the children suggested methods which shaped the methodology.

Although limited by their generic coverage of the ethics of working in research with children, it is important to acknowledge existing ethical standards which enabled me to identify potential dilemmas when planning my research (for example, BERA 2011). Whilst utilising these documents, however, I remained mindful of the need for researchers to be responsive to specific situations and to base some decisions on personal judgement and the ethics which underpin their particular study (Morrow and Richards 1998). Discussions with my research supervisors and other professionals helped me to clarify my own ethical position, to plan my research and to address barriers that arose during the research.

4.3.2 My role as a teacher-researcher: Sharing the Power

Atkinson (1994) suggests that the two roles of the teacher-researcher are distinctly different and can tend to be in conflict. Wong (1995) also asserts that researching and teaching are not compatible. He believes that each requires a different kind of knowledge—one theoretical and one practical—and generates a different kind of inquiry—one contributing to a theoretical knowledge base and the other limited to an understanding of one's own practice. Wilson (1995) contests Wong's (1995) claims, proclaiming research and teaching to be a relationship rather than two different roles. As a teacher-researcher, Wilson (1995) claims that she uses the skills and knowledge of both teaching and

researching, looking intentionally and in different ways at what she does as a teacher.

Carr and Kemmis (1986: 40) present a strong argument in favour of locating 'teachers as critical figures in the research enterprise'. Teacher-researchers take part in the discourse of their profession (Atay 2008). Their research contributes to improved teaching and learning in classrooms and provides much-needed information to educational research in general (Atkinson 1994). Hall (2009) promotes practitioner research as a relatively naturalistic, and thus authentic, process for those working in complex contexts where demands on practice and levels of expertise shift over time. This relates to constructs of professionalism, professional learning and the development of teaching (Lofthouse 2014).

Teacher research has a positive impact on teachers' professional development (Atay 2008). Research can provide an alternative to the passive role imposed on teachers in traditional models of professional development (Burbank and Kauchack 2003). Research as a model for professional development has been acknowledged as being successful in allowing teachers to ask critical questions of their practice (Atay 2008). Sachs (2003) queries the extent to which practitioner research allows teachers to ask critical questions of the political determinants that shape the parameters of their practice. Lofthouse (2014: 13), however, suggests that teacher research can empower teachers to challenge school systems which demand the convergence of practice with 'narrowly constructed conceptions of school improvement'.

Conflicts inevitably occur between the role of a teacher and the role of a researcher (Hammack 1997). Teachers have a primary obligation to their students whilst researchers have an obligation to the field in which they seek to make a contribution (ibid). Teacher-researchers' data grows dynamically as the research progresses (Sachs 2003). As a teacher-researcher, I also have the opportunity to

present my work to audiences beyond my own class and school. The preparation of papers, presentations and workshops are an essential part of my role as a researcher. First and foremost, however, I am a teacher with a moral and ethical obligation to the children I teach. I, therefore, have to be careful that my actions as a researcher do not compromise my role as a teacher (Wong 1995; Baumann 1996). For the most part, I was able to manage this issue by allocating specific times, outside of the school day/week to research related tasks which did not directly benefit the children, for example, writing up transcriptions and preparing and analysing data. I also ensured that I only accepted opportunities to disseminate my work during the school holidays so that it did not impact on the time I spent teaching. I was acutely aware, however, that any opportunity to expand audiences for the children's voices that I was representing was an opportunity to have those voices heard and could ultimately lead to improved transitions.

Constraints of time can limit a teacher-researcher's ability to perform either role satisfactorily (Baumann 1996; Wong 1995). Atkinson (1994), however, points out that classroom research is conducted by many teachers as part of their day-to-day work and is seen by them as an integral part of their teaching and as a way to increase and improve their teaching and students' learning. They are formalising, as researchers, what they already do, as teachers, by systematically documenting and analysing their work and that of their students (ibid). Reflective practice necessitates record keeping and analysis. Curriculums must be evaluated, and innovating teaching practice assessed. Student records must be kept and maintained in a methodical way (Hammack 1997).

Dual role conflict occurs when teacher-research activity is not part of a school's normal educational processes (ibid). The issue of transition is one which I need to

address in my role as Year One teacher, even if I did not choose to participate in research. It was important to ensure, however, that the children's involvement in the research did not cause them to miss out on any other learning opportunities. The research did not represent additional work for me or the children. It was embedded into a project which was specifically planned to meet the Year One curriculum expectations. The transition project provided a real purpose for the children's learning. I, therefore, consider the project to be time effective within both roles.

Sachs (2008) contests that a major ethical consideration for any teacher-research project that directly involves children is how and to what extent it will benefit the children. I believed that the research had the potential to directly improve the transition outcomes for the children involved in the study as well as future cohorts of children in our school and beyond. It also provided opportunities for the children to develop a range of skills that they could apply to all other aspects of their learning, for example, speaking and listening, problem solving and teamwork.

As a teacher-researcher it was essential that I identified my own assumptions and biases as I worked, seeking to establish a disciplined subjectivity and a clear statement of the research context (Sach 2008). I committed to working with respect to my students, my educational colleagues, and my community, as well as the professional world beyond my classroom—to the school district and to education in general (Atay 2008).

4.3.3 Consent, Assent or Dissent: The Power to choose

It is ethically necessary to gain consent to research. Respect for persons of any age and their freedom to make decisions that reflect their own interests and preferences is a fundamental component of the student voice pedagogy and research. Children's voices are, however, subject to the interpretations of adult gatekeepers who have the power to control their access to research opportunities; mediate their worlds and mute their voices (Fielding 2004; Wyness 2012; O'Neill 2014). O'Neill (2014: 221), therefore, questions whether age is an acceptable rationale for preventing children from making an informed decision about their own participation in research. Children cannot legally give consent to participate in research by themselves (O'Neill 2014). Adults must make a decision about consent on their behalf. Gaining informed consent from the school, including the Head Teacher and Governors, and from the parents of both the 'expert' and the 'novice' children was my first priority (BERA, 2011). Parents across the school received a consent form, which they were asked to sign and return (Appendix One). This included specific reference to (and details of) the research methods, including photographs and videos. The Head Teacher and Governing body completed a similar consent procedure.

Researchers have a duty to appropriately inform potential participants and their legal guardians about the nature and intentions of the research and their right to choose whether they participate or not. In research with young children, however, this commitment is dependent on an evaluation the children's ability to make informed decisions (Kirk 2007; Wiles, Heath, Crow and Charles 2005). At this stage, researchers who are respectful to the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UN 1989), may seek children's assent. Interpretations of assent are varied and inconsistent (Dockett, Einarsdottir and Perry 2012), ranging from an overt confirmation of a wish to participate (rather than merely a compliancy or failure to object) (Vitiello 2003; Coyne 2010; Diekema 2006;

Nelson and Reynolds 2003) to an ongoing process which is 'embedded in relationships' (Dockett, Einarsdottir and Perry 2012) and alert to children's responses (Cocks 2006). The right to dissent, however, is non-negotiable (Dockett, Einarsdottir and Perry 2012).

Providing appropriate and relevant information is a pre-requisite to seeking children's or their guardians' consent/assent to participate. Consent and assent processes need to be matched to the context of the research (O'Neill 2014). Researchers need to establish a balance between overloading the participants with too much or too complicated information and providing too simplistic or little information (Dockett, Perry and Kearney 2012; Einarsdottir 2011; Wiles et al. 2005). They also have a responsibility to facilitate open discussion about the project and what participation involves and to allow time for potential participants to ask questions and reflect on the information provided (Alderson and Morrow 2004). I provided all parents, teachers and governors with a project information sheet (Thomas 2009) (Appendix Two). I also invited parents to attend one of two meetings during which we discussed the project in more detail. The meeting enabled me to answer parents' questions and address their concerns. Parents were asked to discuss the project with their children as part of the process of eliciting consent (Cutter-MacKenzie, Edwards and Widdop Quinton 2015). During a separate meeting I presented my research proposal to the Head Teacher and the board of governors. Again, this gave them the opportunity to ask questions and interrogate the integrity of the research. I did not introduce the children to the project until school and parental consent had been granted.

Whilst parental consent is usually specified through a signed consent form, children's indication of assent or dissent can be affirmed in various forms, including verbal, behavioural, or emotional. For example, children may say yes or no; engage willingly or reluctantly or show happiness or distress. Researchers, therefore, need to be flexible in their approach to recording consent. Ashcroft,

Goodenough, Williamson and Kent (2003) and Wiles et al. (2005) discuss the advantages of audio recording conversations which affirm children's consent. Dockett et al. (2012), however, point out that (similar to a consent that is documented via a signature) this method may lead to a misconception that consent is binding and irreversible.

Mixed signals about a child's willingness to participate (for example, if a child verbally consents to participate but then appears to be a reluctant participant can manifest as a result of contextual influences. Power relationships between children and close adults, peers, teachers and educational establishments may convey an obligation to consent and cause concern about the reaction dissent could evoke (Einarsdottir 2007; Harcourt and Conroy 2009). Children's decisions to consent or dissent may be based on what is happening around them (for example, how appealing the participation activities appear; what other activities are going on at the same time and what their friends have chosen to do) (Einarsdottir 2011; Gallagher et al. 2010). Children may be happy to participate in some research activities (such as drawing), but not others. One of the benefits of my prior knowledge of the children is that I can tailor modes of participation to the children's abilities and preferences. Researchers who are committed to the principles of participatory research and the 'empowerment' of children have an ethical obligation to give children regular opportunities, throughout all stages of the project, to reaffirm or dissent, particularly when the nature of participation changes (Alderson 2005; Flewitt 2005). Mixed or unclear signals should be clarified with the participant or those that know them well (Black, Rabins, Sugarman and Karalawish 2010). The right to assent or dissent affords children some control over their privacy and dissent can sometimes represent a conscious or subconscious self 'gatekeeping' (Danby and Farrell 2005:61). Participants, however, are not required to justify their consent (ibid, 2010) and researchers can only speculate on reasons for dissent.

The nature and consequences of dissent for both researchers and participants is sometimes overlooked (Dockett et al. 2012). Researchers should be respectful of a child's decision to dissent, regardless of the impact it has on their research (Warin 2011). Dockett et al. (2012) exemplify various ways in which researchers have provided children with opportunities to express dissent, including thumbs up/down or happy/sad face cards. The children involved in my own research indicated their assent by placing their name on a thumbs up board at the start of each research session. Expressions of dissent, however, can be implicit and researchers should be alert and responsive to less obvious modes of expression, such as body language (ibid).

Children's position as research participants is 'messy' and 'compromised' (Gallagher et al 2010: 479). Their decisions about participation are embedded in a context of interdependent relationships between researchers and participants and adults and children (Gallagher et al., 2010; Cocks 2006) and unequal power relationships (Harcourt and Conroy 2009). Children's decisions are, thus, subject to the influences and expectations of close adults and peers (Harcourt et al. 2009; Gallagher et al. 2010). One of the advantages of my close relationship with the children is that an in-depth knowledge of each child's character, interests and personal preferences, enables me to assess their ease with participation and be respectful of dissent (Dockett and Perry 2011). Throughout the research I remained vigilant to non-verbal indicators (for example, behaviour and body language), as well as verbal indicators, and was mindful of the context in which those actions and words were located (Dockett et al. 2012).

Although most of the children involved in my research participated enthusiastically throughout the research process, there were times when some children's engagement in the research activities lapsed. I was aware that children's stamina and attention spans vary. Ensuring that children always had the option to move onto non-research related activities, therefore, reassured them

that they had a choice about when and for how long to participate. It also reduced peer pressure, competition and enabled them to opt out discreetly. Sometimes all that was needed was a little adult support or careful scaffolding in order to increase an individual's or group's chance of success in the research activity they had elected to use.

4.3.4 Confidentiality: The Power to Protect

As a member of the research community I was under an 'obligation to protect the anonymity of research participants and to keep research data confidential' (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias 1992). I, therefore, removed any trace of the children's identities, and that of the school, from the records I kept. I chose to use pseudonyms in place of the children's real names, rather than referring to the children as 'Child A' or 'Child B', because I believed that the latter would neglect the personal nature of my research context. Complete confidentiality can never be guaranteed in child research subjects (Mahon 1996 and others). I was particularly aware that my school and the children remained vulnerable due to their association with the author (Scott 1996). This caused me to think carefully about how I have worded and presented the detail of my report so as not to reveal identities. Matthew's 'Spot the difference' photographs, for example, was a valuable piece of evidence because it highlighted the incongruence between the two year groups (see p.193). As these photographs contained images of children, I chose not to present these in the findings.

4.3.5 Enabling Power Sharing

All research production is arbitrated by power (Spyrou 2011: 154). Inevitably, there are tensions between my research intention and my researcher responsibilities (Keddie 2000: 72; Hammack 1997). Respect for the children's

positioning as co-researchers does not reduce my responsibilities (Woodhead and Faulkner 2000). Parkinson (2001), for example, draws attention to the generational and power differences that occur within many research situations with children. My research methods needed to be appropriate for the children involved in the study, its social and cultural context and the kinds of research questions posed (Christensen and James 2000: 2). Researchers have adopted various strategies to minimise the imbalances of power during participatory research with children, including 'blending in' (Corsaro 2003); enabling children to control of audio equipment to record their own discussions (Thomson and Hall 2008) and role reversal, for example, children sitting on the adult chair/researcher sitting on the floor (ibid). Mayall (2000), however, argues that researchers need to acknowledge the subordinated role of children to adults during research encounters.

My choice of child centered (Barker and Weller 2003) research methods were influenced by Thomas (2009: 159) who, in line with Postmodernist values (Schleich 1997), encourages teacher/researchers to think creatively when devising methods. Jindal-Snape (2012) argues that creative approaches to support transition are invaluable, as they can support children's emotional well-being and social skills, whilst giving them a sense of agency and voice. For this reason, I decided to adopt methods which were based on my children's preferred modes of communication (Barker and Weller 2003) and which had the potential to promote dialogue and facilitate the respondents' 'voice' (Clark and Moss 2001; 2005) in a creative and flexible manner.

4.3.6 Influencing the Methodology: Having a say

Research skills, knowledge and competency deficits, are often presented as obstructions to children's involvement in research (Kellett 2005 2009 2010; Kellett

et al. 2004). The supposition that children do not have the capacity or maturity to participate meaningfully in research is widespread (Lundy et al. 2011), as is the conception that young children lack the skills to express their own views (Bradbury-Jones and Taylor 2015). Kellett et al. (2004), however, dispute the supposition that age is a barrier to participation in research. Children as young as five have participated in research (Lundy et al. 2011; Gray and Winter 2011). Empirical research illustrates how even young children have demonstrated competency in various stages of the research process (The Open University 2013; Bergstrom, Jonsson and Shanahan 2010; Lundy and McEnvoy 2012). Gray and Winter (2011) argue that children who are treated as equal research partners take ownership and actively participate in every stage of the research process.

Ensuring research methods matched the competency of the child participants in this research was a key factor in ensuring their meaningful engagement (Bradbury-Jones et al. 2015). This was achieved by encouraging the children to choose their own methods for informing the novices, as the children automatically chose methods of dissemination that they felt comfortable with. Joshua, for example, ([see p.240](#)) chose to present his knowledge using his preferred medium of art. The approach I used played to the children's strengths rather than to adults (Clark et al. 2003) by encouraging children to communicate their views through a combination of participatory methods. There is a danger, however, that, in order to facilitate participation on a level that was accessible to children, rigorous and proven approaches to research could be 'watered down' or discarded in favour of child-friendly approaches which may not produce valuable or reliable outcomes (Bradbury-Jones et al. 2015). Guided by my ontological, epistemological and pedagogical positioning, I believe that it is better to safeguard children's optimal engagement by matching methods to their competencies than to engulf them in methods which are beyond their understanding or exclude them by using a too sophisticated methodology. Many adults might also benefit from similar methods and find them more appealing than traditional methods. Punch

(2002) suggests that they should be called 'research friendly' or 'people friendly' rather than child friendly. The challenge, therefore, is between not patronising children and recognising their competences, while maintaining their enjoyment of being involved with research and facilitating their ability to communicate their views to the world (Punch 2002).

Bucknall (2009) suggests that very young children require support be able to carry out research. Children's participation in research, therefore, is dependent on the cooperation of adults (Lundy 2007). Enabling very young children to participate in research on any level can be problematic (Lundy 2007). I am committed to involving the children in becoming 'agents of change' in the transition process within my school and active participants in my research. I, therefore, sought inspiration from the work of researchers who have adopted methods that are age appropriate, engaging and compatible with children's competences in order to facilitate active participation for younger children (Clark 2010; Dockett, Einarsdottir and Perry 2009; Clark and Moss 2001).

One justification for inequalities in research which claims to recognise children's voice is the traditional adult perception that children do not have the communication skills to express themselves clearly (Kellett 2005). David (2002), however, suggests that all children have the potential to be 'skillful communicators'. One of my concerns was that the children in my class were too young to be able to take control of the research. Woodhead and Faulkner (2000) challenge the argument that age is a delineating factor within the competence debate. Kellett (2005) also disputes the argument that children do not have sufficient knowledge and understanding to lead the way in research. The main barrier to empowering children as researchers is not their lack of adult status but their lack of research skills (Mayall 2000; Christensen and Prout 2002). Kellett

(2006) has shown that children do need some training before taking full responsibility for their own research. The children involved in Kellett's explorations, however, were aged ten or over. I, therefore, came to the conclusion that (whilst my children had qualified as experts in transition) they still required considerable age appropriate support in order to meaningfully participate as co-researchers.

4.4 The role of the teaching assistant in the research

Ethical tensions relating to the teaching assistant's role in participatory research have been discussed previously in this thesis ([see p.23](#)). Prior to commencing any research, I arranged one afternoon of cover for my teaching assistant (coinciding with my own non-contact time) so that we could discuss the potential study in detail, including the research aims and objectives, ethical tensions and participatory paradigm. Knowing that the teaching assistant had little or no experience of research, I made sure that I used language that was familiar and accessible to her when outlining the research and explaining procedures, for example, consent and dissent (Kidney and MacDonald 2014). I provided her with a project information sheet, which she took away to read more carefully. I also encouraged her to write down any concerns or questions she may have so that we could discuss them in the following day. After consideration, she identified the following questions:

- How would the research be integrated into the daily class routine?
- How we would deal with any children who did not want to be involved in the project or did not have parental consent?
- How long the study would last?

- How much control the children would have over the methodology?

Valuing the teaching assistant's experience of current Year One practices, her pragmatic outlook and her knowledge of the individual children, we talked through the project proposal again: reflecting on possible outcomes, raising more questions, problem solving and making adaptations to the research plan. I was able to address some of the questions raised by referring to my experiences in the pilot study, although I remained conscious that each cohort of children and research context is different. We then discussed our own individual roles in the research, how we could make these manageable and when they would be carried out. We recorded the teaching assistant's role on a role description sheet, whilst agreeing that the role was likely to evolve as the research progressed (Appendix Three). The Teaching assistant participated as a co-researcher throughout the study.

4.5 Sampling

Thomas (2009) argues that the notion of sampling belongs firmly within experimental research. The concept of sampling is particularly at odds with a participatory paradigm which is concerned with the issue of power imbalances and children's rights to voice their opinions (ibid). Any selective process of sampling would forefront some voices whilst negating others. From the outset of the research, therefore, I believed that all children should have the chance to participate fully in the research. The main study involved an entire class of 29 children, all of whom participated fully. Appendix Nineteen illustrates the children involved, their ages at the start of the study and any relevant information about them.

Ideally this strategy would also have been extended to the discussion groups that took place at the junior school, however, due to pressures of the Key Stage Two curriculum and the configuration of the Junior school classes (children from three infant school combined in each of three junior school classes) it proved too difficult to secure discussion time with all of the children who had been involved in the pilot study.

I met with all of the class 3 children who had been involved in the pilot. This created a discussion group of five children (two boys and three girls) and me. Selecting all of the children from the same class meant that only one teacher had to make time in their (already packed) timetable for the children to attend the discussion. We met in a quiet area of the library for approximately 20 minutes.

4.6 The Research Design: Empowering Methods

The research design drew on some of the approaches used in the 'mosaic approach' (Clark and Moss 2001, 2005; Clark 2010) (see glossary). Elements of the Mosaic framework that were particularly considered in this research included multiple methods which recognised the different 'voices' or languages of the children; participatory techniques which valued the children as experts and agents in their own lives and reflexive opportunities which included children and adults in reflecting on meanings. Age-appropriate methods were applied in order to make the research accessible for the children involved (Clark 2010; Darbyshire, MacDougall and Schiller 2005; Dockett, Einarsodottir and Perry 2009). Activities were designed to be creative and engaging, taking into consideration the range of verbal and nonverbal forms of communication through which very young children often demonstrate their views (UN 2009 para 21). Central to the success of these participatory methods was the way in which they were used 'in context and in

continuous dialogue with the children concerned' (Nieuwenhuys 1996: 55). In order to fully respect and develop the individual expertise of the children, the original mosaic approach framework (Clark and Moss 2001) was adapted so that the children themselves decided upon the methods they used, how they presented their research and how their findings were categorised.

My journey of transition played an important role in my methodology. Reflective methodology was key to my data analysis. Throughout the research I kept a reflective journal in which I recorded my thoughts and experiences and highlighted links with the children's experiences. In qualitative research reflective writing is recognised as a method in its own right, as a data source and within the analytical processes (Mellor 2001). It is also a key component of reflective practice, and central to the notion of learning from experience (Jasper 2005). Reflective writing can be used as a tool to support the process of 'systematic reflection' (Harland 2014: 1115), in order that the researcher can become aware of their 'subjective understandings and ontological assumptions (ibid). It has the capacity to develop a writer's critical thinking and analytical abilities, contribute to their cognitive development, enable creativity and unique connections to be made between different sets of information, and to contribute to new perspectives being taken on issues (Jasper 2005). Journal writing enables teachers to reflect on their teaching practice (Brookefield, 1995), providing 'a means for insightful self-discovery and a tool for personal and professional growth' (Hoff, 2002, p. xii). Jasper (2005) cogitates researchers' reflective writing to be central to establishing trustworthiness and rigour of a qualitative study.

The centrality of the role of the researcher to qualitative studies is paramount. My reflective writing in my journal established that centrality and contained clues to the creativity and interpretation within the study that discovered and described new understandings of my own experiences as well as the children's. Reflective writing was also crucial to demonstrating my stance and integrity (Jasper 2005)

and creating transparency in the research process (Ortlipp 2008). As the project developed, I became aware of how closely the children’s transitional experiences connected with my own. This powerful tool sensitised me to the nuances of what the children were saying.

The research design followed eight principal stages (table 4.2).

Research Stage	Action
1	Pilot study
2	Discussions (Main Research
3	Deciding on a resource
4	Making a resource
5	Sharing their resource
6	Transcription
7	Sorting and coding
8	Data analysis

Table 4.2 *Stages of Research*

Stage One was a pilot study during which I explored and evaluated methods, identified potential problems and refined my research design. Stages Two to Six focused on the collection of data which could offer rich descriptive accounts of the phenomenon under investigation (Stake 1995; Willig 2009; Yin 2009). In order to adapt to the needs and preferences of individual children this data collection allowed for a varied repertoire of verbal and non-verbal techniques (Thomas and O’Kane 1998). Stage Two introduced the children to the project and engaged them in initial discussions about what they thought the Reception children needed to know before they started Year One. This stage was particularly designed to elicit the children’s perspectives of the transition from the Foundation Stage to Key Stage One (*RQ a and b*). Stages Three to Six were designed to enable

me to identify how the children's findings and experiences could be used to support new groups of children moving into Key Stage One (*RQ c, d and e*). These stages also provided opportunities to explore how the children's participation in research could be further developed. Stage Three involved the children working independently, in pairs or within a small group to plan a resource that would support the Reception children in their transition. In Stage Four the children made their resource. Stage Five gave the children opportunity to present their resource to the Reception children. During Stage Six the Year One children acted as tour guides for the visiting Reception children. Stage Seven involved the process of transcription. Stage Eight involved the children in the process of sorting and coding the data. Stage Nine was an analysis of the data during which I was able to critically analyse the theoretical and methodological links between the children's participation in the research, their voice and their perceptions of themselves as experts. In order guide the reader through the research design in this chapter, the research questions to which each stage of the research relates are specified in italics after the stage number, for example, Stage Two *Discussions (RQ a)*. The overriding aim of the complete research design was to enable me to develop a theoretical and practical framework for young children who have recently experienced transition to participate in supporting others.

The pilot study took place during the last three weeks before the Easter break in 2014. Most of the main body of research took place during the spring term of 2015. This provided the children with time to become familiar with different aspects and practices of Year One and at the same time for memories of their most recent transition to be relatively fresh (Margetts 2006). All of the children in the Year One cohort at the time of the pilot study (21 children) and the main study (29 children) were involved. My justification for this decision was rooted in my school's commitment to inclusive pedagogy. I also believe that listening to a variety of children's voices leads the way to a better understanding of the issues

(James and Prout 1990).

Integral to the research design was the notion of a project-based curriculum which ran throughout our school and across the federation. Each year group undertook a maximum of six projects through the year. Children were introduced to each project by way of a relevant and unique 'hook'. Enthused by this hook (which provided a purpose for their learning) they then worked towards an outcome which illustrated their learning. The hook for the transition project was a visit from the Reception Class teacher who asked the Year One children to help smooth the next cohorts' transition. The outcome of the project was to be determined by the children and support the Reception children as they prepared to transit to Year One.

Each project focused on two prime areas of learning. Projects were carefully planned to meet the relevant year group requirements of the National Curriculum (DfE 2014) for the focus areas of learning. The learning outcomes for each project were monitored and evaluated upon completion of the project. The combined project overview for the entire year was closely scrutinised to ensure that all aspects of the National Curriculum relevant to each year group had been covered (ibid). This study formed part of this curriculum.

The Transition Project focused on Literacy and Design and Technology. Planning for the project, for example, incorporated the following Year One learning objectives:

Design and Technology

- To design purposeful, functional, appealing products for themselves and other users based on design criteria.
- To generate, develop, model and communicate their ideas through talking, drawing, templates, mock-ups and, where appropriate, information and communication technology.

- To evaluate their ideas and products against design criteria.

Literacy

- To give well-structured descriptions, explanations and narratives for different purposes, including expressing feelings.
- To maintain attention and participate actively in collaborative conversations, staying on topic and initiating and responding to comments.
- To participate in discussions, presentations, performances, role play, improvisations and debates.
- To consider and evaluate different viewpoints, attending to and building on the contributions of others.

It, therefore, formed an essential part of the Year One curriculum (DfE, 2014) and did not represent additional work for the children or myself. The Design and Technology elements of the research ([see above](#)) were carried out during the three afternoons that were allocated on the weekly timetable for ‘project work’⁹. Literacy elements ([see above](#)) were either carried out during project time or during the time allocated for Literacy¹⁰. Children were also free to work on the project resources during their ‘Discovery Time’¹¹ and many of them chose to do this.

4.6.1 Stage One: The Pilot Study

The pilot study provided an opportunity to trial a draft research plan (which was later refined) in preparation for the main study. It helped, for example, to establish the optimal number of participants in discussion groups. Pilot studies in school are sometimes perceived to be invasive of teaching and learning time and of no real purpose or benefit to the child participants (Clark and Moss, 2001). In this case, however, the pilot formed part of a transition programme for the next

⁹ Project allocation for Year One: 2 hours, three days a week.

¹⁰ Literacy allocation for Year One: 1.5 hours, five days a week.

¹¹ Discovery Time: when children were free to engage in self-chosen activities (a least 4 hours per week).

cohort of children. It also enabled the Year One children to demonstrate their commitment to one of our school values: Stewardship. I had been the children's teacher in Reception. During this time, they had been involved in the Pre-School to Reception transition project (Taddeo 2011). Consequently, I knew the children well and I was familiar with their previous experience of research. At the time of this study I was teaching a new Reception cohort, whilst my young 'researchers' were becoming accustomed to their new positions in Year One. During the pilot, I operated as 'visiting researcher', using my non-contact time to work with the children at times agreed with the Year One teachers. Throughout the pilot I critically reflected upon all aspects of the design, including the methods and outcomes. Upon completion of the project, I completed a summative evaluation. This enabled me to plan the main body of my research from an informed starting point.

4.6.2 Stage Two (Main Research): Discussions (RQ a and b)

My school's approach to planning is that children are drawn into a project by way of a 'hook'. Enthused by this hook (which provides a purpose for their learning) they then work towards an outcome which illustrates their learning. It was my decision to incorporate my research into my planning. This meant that the research became part of our daily curriculum, rather than an addition to the timetable. The hook in this case was a visit from Tom (the Reception Teacher). Tom explained that the Reception children would like to find out more about what Year One was really like. He asked the Year One children for their help. This effectively introduced the children to the project and its outcome. It also stimulated initial whole class discussion about how we could help the 'novice' (Reception) children and what important information they needed to help them with transition. The children then had time in small groups of no more than five

children to discuss the project and how they could inform and support the Reception children.

Involving the children in discussions demonstrated to them that the adults acknowledged their views and feelings and were prepared to take them seriously (Lancaster 2003). Information gathered in groups can differ from information gathered from the same participants individually (Hojjer 1990).

Focus groups do not easily tap into individual biographies or the minutiae of decision making during intimate moments, but they do examine how knowledge and, more importantly, ideas develop, and operate, within a given cultural context

(Kitzinger 1994: 105)

Discussion groups create a familiar and more relaxed atmosphere to exchange ideas. They can embrace a wider range of issues (Thomas and O’Kane 1998) and encourage participant views which may otherwise go unvoiced. However, they require careful management to ensure that all participants are able to contribute (Kruger and Casey 2009).

Inspired by researchers who have used this technique with young children (Dockett and Perry 1999; Clark and Moss 2005 and others), I believed that group discussions would be less threatening for the experts and that they would minimise the power differences between myself (the researcher) and the children (Eder and Fingerson 2003), as the latter would dominate by number. I hoped that group discussions would stimulate contributions and memory (although I anticipated that the intense emotions involved in transition would naturally lead to recall); peer interaction would influence thinking and behaviour (Griebel and Niesel 2000) and shy children in my class would be supported by their peers. In order to afford the children some control over the selection process, I wanted them to choose their own discussion groups. I was aware, however, that this strategy may lead to the exclusion of particular children. For this reason, the first

child in each group was selected by me. Choosing children who would typically be left out of friendship groups to start off the selection process enabled me to avoid this dilemma.

Finding ways of ensuring that children have the time, space and confidence to freely and openly express their perspectives is imperative to the philosophical positioning of my research. Some children are shy and uncomfortable communicating in a pre-determined discussion group but may be more open and talkative in a friendship group (Hill 2006). One of the limitations of the discussion approach is that it demands a reasonable degree of language skills. Although this was not a particular barrier to the children concerned, I was confident that many of the other methods that were deployed in this research (for example, drawing and resource making) could be used to support less vocal children in their contributions (Kruger and Casey 2009).

Discussions in the presence of an adult can to some children appear more like an investigation or interrogation which inevitably affects their responses (McWilliam, Casey and Sims 2009). Within her research, Mayall (2000) exemplifies how she positions herself as an adult who wants to learn more about childhood from insiders. Relationship building strategies, however, work differently in different research contexts and with different children and strategies and it is not a case of one size fits all (Lewis 2008). One strategy I used for both recognising these differences and helping children to feel more empowered was to engage them in research conversations, rather than structured or formal interviews (Mayall 2000). Using this technique enabled me to 'hand over the agenda to children, so that they could 'control the pace and direction of the conversation, raising and exploring topics' (Mayall 2000: 133) of relevance and interest to themselves.

Another strategy I used was to engage the children in conversations within familiar settings as they played (Dockett and Perry 2005). In order to support children who lacked confidence in face to face discussions or required more thinking time, I positioned an audio recorder in a quiet area of the classroom which children were encouraged to use if they wished to add or amend any thoughts. This also proved to be an effective means of data collection.

Informal techniques often facilitate the most 'natural' interactions between a researcher and the respondents (Hitchcock and Hughes 1995). Holding research discussions in a familiar school environment, however, can be problematic because children may consider the activities to be class work (Lundy, McEvoy and Byrne 2011). Conversely, a familiar environment is important in terms of children's feelings of security (Lanston, Abbott, Lewis and Kellett 2004). This issue was addressed in part by keeping the engagement as informal as possible and by using the least conventional or school-like spaces available (Lundy and McEvoy 2009), for example, a cushioned area in the outdoor 'cabin'.

Frequent informal opportunities for discussion continued throughout the project. As far as possible, my intention was to hand over the agenda to the children so that they could control the pace and direction of the conversation, raising and exploring topics' (Mayall 2000: 133). 'Open ended items' (such as 'What is different about Year One?'), however, were sometimes used to supply a frame of reference (Kerlinger 1970). They also enabled me to probe more deeply. My relationship with the children may have encouraged them to divulge information freely (Hopkins 2002). I was aware, however, that preconceived perceptions may automatically arise from my familiarity with the children (Scott, 1996) or that the children might merely provide me with the information they thought I expected (Denscombe 2003). Dialogue can generate discrepancies between what people communicate and what they actually believe or do (Robson 2002). I realised also

that it was important to think carefully about how I phrased my interactions with the children (Greg and Taylor 1999). Developing each point raised by the children through further dialogue and carrying out reviews with the experts helped to ensure that I was interpreting the respondents' comments as they intended (Maynard 2002; O'Connell Davidson and Layder 1994). For example, I played back videos to the children who had created them and utilised the conversations generated by the playbacks to check that my interpretation of the video matched the intention of the creator (Fleer 2008: 113). When playing back a video recording of a tour to the tour guide, I was able to ask why they had chosen to focus their tour on certain aspects of Year One and how they felt about their expert role.

Following an initial discussion with each group during which I explained the reasons for recording conversations (maximum data collection) and their rights to alter this practice if needed, group discussions were recorded using a small audio recorder. This was an efficient method of recording the spoken word. It also enabled me to remain alert to what was being said (Bryman 2008). As you would expect (given the age of the children) the presence of the audio recorder initially caused a bit of a distraction but, with constant use, it soon became unobtrusive and the children even prompted its use if it was omitted for any reason (ibid.). One of the disadvantages of recording the children's conversations was that (at the transcription stage) some voices got heard more than others and children sometimes spoke at the same time. Another drawback to this method of data collection was that it did not take into consideration non-verbal responses of the children (Thomas 2009: 161). Although I intended to write these down, in reality this was not always the case. Conversations that were impromptu or embedded within other activities during all stages of the research were more difficult to record. Mostly my teaching assistant and I recorded these in note form on post-its. I was aware, however, that this was not the most efficient method of recording and could well produce unreliable data.

Tangen (2008) urges researchers not to limit their listening to the spoken word. Children at different ages can express themselves differently and, even within one age group, there can be considerable differences (Griebel and Niesel 2000). My in-depth knowledge of the children in my class, therefore, encouraged me to also use non-verbal methods as a means of gathering data. Some children, for example, initially drew their ideas which we later used as a point of reference for our discussions. This methodology included children who were normally very shy or not interested in joining in class discussions. Those who chose to participate were not always the most dominant or confident members of the class (see, for example, Hope, p.247).

Discussions selected for data collection and analysis were not limited to the initial stages of the research and were ongoing throughout the process. Post the resource making activity each group had the opportunity to discuss their resource with an adult. The resources themselves generated rich discussions. These were also audio recorded and non-verbal responses noted. Post visit 'debriefings' took on a similar form of data recording.

Reception Class Discussions

Data collection was not limited to the Year One children either. In order to find out what the resources and visits looked like from the novices' perspective, I enlisted the help of the Reception staff who adopted similar methods to record discussions and feedback from the Reception children throughout the research. During the first weeks of the following academic year (when the novices had just moved into Year One), I gathered data in the form of recorded discussions, field notes, photos and observations. This helped to measure the impact of the

brokerage activities and resources.

Junior School Discussions

One of the advantages of a study that spans over several years within a close-knit community such as ours is the prospect of exploring the ongoing effects of the research for all those involved. Within the context of our infant school, I am lucky enough to be able to follow the journeys of children as they transit from Year R through to Year Two, at which point they transit on to our local junior school. Links between our school and the junior school are strong and teachers across the Foundation Stage and Key Stages One and Two maintain good relationships. This afforded me the opportunity to 'catch up' with some of the children who had been involved in the pilot study. The junior school interviews provided a valuable longitudinal dimension to the research (see p.267).

In order to find out about their ongoing experiences I met with a group of six children at the junior school. These children were selected by the Year Three teachers and had all taken part in the pilot study. Discussions took place during the first half of the spring term (2017) in a quiet reading area in the main part of the junior school. Liaising closely with the children's class teachers I was able to ensure that this meeting did not impact on their learning or cause them to be excluded from other activities. The children's involvement was completely voluntary and consents from their parents and the school were sought in advance. At the time of the discussion the children were all in Year Three and they had been at the school for six months. I began by asking the children about their most recent transition experience (the move from infant school to junior school).

4.6.3 Stage Three: Deciding on a resource (RQ c and d)

Choice of method directly influences the type and quality of data that is captured (Green and Hill, 2005). Using different methods to explore the same issues may produce different findings (ibid). Methods which do not depend on direct interaction with an adult and are reflexive to children's preferred mediums can be a more effective way of eliciting children's perspectives and experiences (Spyrou 2011). Alternatives that have been explored include role-play and drama (Christensen and James 2000; Veale 2005); radio discussions (Young and Barrett 2001); visual diaries (Burke 2008); child produced videos (Haw 2008) and the use of digital spaces (McWilliam, Casey and Sims 2009). Visual methods can elicit different responses than speech or writing and are more likely to enable quicker emotional responses (Thomson 2008). Leitch (2008: 41), for example, describes how children can narrate 'the unrecognised, unacknowledged or "unsayable" stories that they hold' through drawing or collage. Aesthetically creative methods may be more accessible to children who find it hard to express themselves verbally and often facilitate more pleasurable experiences of participation for these children (Spyrou 2011). Direct engagement of children in shaping the research processes (not just as subjects) is essential to developing a UNCRC-informed approach to research (Lundy and McEvoy 2009). I wanted the children (as the protagonists in the transition process) to personally demonstrate their perspectives and take ownership of the project. I, therefore, challenged them to come up with their own ideas of how they could support and inform the new children.

Although I armed myself with a bank of resource ideas which I thought may suit the children, I did not need to refer to these as many children quickly articulated their own ideas. This in turn inspired the others. My role, therefore, evolved into one of enabling the children's ideas by ensuring access to resources and encouraging them to develop their ideas (largely by problematising and

questioning). In order to remain focused on my research questions, I occasionally used prompts, such as, 'How do you think this will help the new children?' Some of the children's ideas were clearly derived from skills we had practised in the past, for example book making, map making, photography and storytelling. This showed that the children were able to apply their learning in new contexts. Other approaches they came up with were original, for example a song, video and puppet show. The multi-sensory nature of the tools they chose opened up 'different avenues for the children to express their perspectives' (Clark and Moss 2005: 84). These participatory techniques greatly assisted in the breakdown of power imbalances, not only by giving the children greater control over the research agenda and more time and space to explore issues that concerned them, but also by creating an atmosphere in which there were no right or wrong answers (Thomas and O'Kane 1998).

In order to avoid missing any of the rich data that emerged from this and all other stages of the research, my teaching assistant and I kept a joint log of our reflections. Daily reviews of the log enabled me to begin to analyse the data as the research progressed as well as creating an archive of data that could be referred back to later in the research.

4.6.4 Stage Four: Resource Making ([RQ c and d](#))

Like any other research approach which employs multiple methods, the approach I used was destined to be time-consuming. Allowing the children to gather their own material meant that the research was guided by their interests and preoccupations. Clark and Moss (2005) suggest that a better insight can sometimes be gathered by following children's preoccupations. Using approaches to research that value children's participation meant that some of the directions

of the research were unknown at the outset. Trusting the children, therefore, was imperative if such an approach was to be effective (Dockett and Perry 2004). The children were free to work independently or collaboratively. Working party groups ranged from two to four children. These groups were selected by the children. In theory, this should have ensured that all children were able to work as they would choose, however, I was aware that (in practice) personalities, loyalties and classroom dynamics would prevent complete freedom of choice.

This cohort of children are particularly independent, creative and resourceful. Most children or groups of children were able to independently gather the materials they required to make their resource from within the classroom or other areas of the school. In order to facilitate the best outcomes, however, the adults sometimes enhanced the environment with materials that could further facilitate the children's ideas, for example, additional iPads for photographic and video recording and lolly sticks for puppet making. The children's resources provided rich insights into their thinking and acted as a tool for communication (Anning and Ring 2004). The resources also provided a concrete reference point that could be used during discussions, as well as additional data in the form of symbolic representations which illustrated and documented the children's perspectives (White and Sharp 2007). Analysis of a diverse range of artefacts, however, necessitated flexible approach to analysis.

4.6.5 Stage Five: Sharing Their Resource ([RQ c and d](#))

During the Summer Term the Year One children visited the Reception class in small groups to share their resources. These resources acted as a stimulus to aid discussion (Harper 2002). In order to gather some of the rich data that arose from this opportunity, a colleague and I video recorded some of the interactions, which I was later able to review, transcribe and analyse.

Video based methodologies are increasingly being used for the purpose of researching children's perspectives (Fleer 2008; Cutter-MacKenzie, Edwards and Widdop Quinton 2015). It is reported that they have the potential to increase and improve information gathering and 'enhance the construction of datasets based upon dynamism and the complexities of classroom life' (Johnson, Sullivan and Williams 2009: 1). Video recording enables researchers to explore complex pedagogical interactions and the more subtle aspects of student behaviour (Brophy 2006). It can capture views that are beyond the limitations of a researcher's 'two eyes' (Hickey and Schafer 2006). There are, however, a number of ethical and methodological dilemmas related to using this approach (Cutter-MacKenzie, Edwards and Widdop Quinton 2015). Some critics go so far as to assert that the intrusive nature of videoing contaminates the authenticity of the context it endeavours to comprehend (Johnson, Sullivan and Williams 2009).

Researchers often assume that video data replicates reality (Lomax and Casey 1998). Lomax and Casey (1998), however, argue that video cameras have an exclusive capacity to distort the researched phenomenon. Researcher subjectivity is one of the key dilemmas to consider. Video data is generally framed by the researcher and filtered by what the researcher sees and wishes to record (Mondada 2006). A researcher's positioning defines the nature of the data collected and, from the outset of collection, dictates how the data is interpreted (Spencer 2011). In extreme cases it is possible for researchers to manipulate the events being recorded by focusing in or out to highlight specific aspects of coverage (Baker, Green and Skukauskaite 2008) in the same way that non-participant observers might take field notes. In order to engage with the subjective nature of video methodologies (Cousin 2010; Lahman 2008), it is important to acknowledge that the data collected via this means in this research was collected from a particular perspective and that (as the researcher) I made decisions about what and how the data was captured.

The research log (kept by myself and my teaching assistant) was used in conjunction with the videos to address this reflexivity (Flewitt 2006). The log enabled me to offer other perspectives on the video data collected. Further triangulation (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983) was achieved by playing the videos back to the children we had videoed. This process cued the children's recall, stimulated discussion and generated 'interpretations about the motives, goals and values of the participants' (Fleer 2008: 113). I was, for example, able to ask some of the experts why they had chosen to focus their tours on certain aspects of Year One and how they felt about their expert role.

Later in the same term, the 'expert' (Year 1) children interacted with the 'novice' (Reception) children during orientation visits to the Year One classroom. In order to make this more manageable (especially for data collection) visits took place in small groups of no more than four children (two novices and two experts) over several weeks. During these visits each expert showed a novice around the classroom. Hart (1997) promotes the use of tours to help people convey their local knowledge of their immediate surroundings. The physicality and mobility of this technique played to the children's strengths as natural explorers and 'knowledge guides' (Clark and Moss 2005). Placing the children in control of the content of the tour readdressed the power balance in the setting (Clark and Moss 2005) and freed myself and my colleague to, once again, record some of the interactions. Attempting to use the digital recording equipment during moveable activities proved problematic, mainly due to background noise. Sometimes I resorted to taking field notes. Whilst I was able to write down key commentary and record many non-verbal data (for example, body language, movement and gestures), my 'on the spot' editing inevitably destroyed some of the detail. I was also, at times, distracted by children who needed support. Realising that some meaningful data was becoming lost and learning from the first two of these visits,

my teaching assistant and I took it in turns to track one expert/novice focus group during subsequent visits using a pre-prepared plan of the Year One environment. This enabled me to gather data about how the group traversed the classroom. The maps provided a valuable tool which guided further discussions with the children.

4.6.6 Stage Six: Transcription

Transcription from audio recordings facilitated repeated examination of what the children had said during group discussions (Bryman 2008). To check for inaccuracies, I read back the transcripts, whilst listening to the audio recordings. This process was time consuming. It also 'decontextualised' (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2005: 282) the data and neglected more visual and non-verbal aspects of the discussion (Mishler 1986). Hence, it was necessary to refer to the field note post-its and reflective journal in order to add any background information that contributed to the context of discussions (Fasoli 2003). I was mindful that data from unrecorded conversations could be unreliable due to the method's reliance on secondary resources. The process of transcribing the evidence from video recordings of tours and visits was even more complex as it required transcription of both verbal and visual aspects. Self-transcription of the evidence brought me closer to the data and enabled me to identify key themes (Bryman 2008). I was aware, however, that my position as an insider with considerable knowledge of the relationships between those involved (Fasoli 2003), may intensify the subjectivity of my interpretations (Kvale 1996).

4.6.7 Stage Seven: Sorting and Coding

Examples of children's involvement in the process of analysing or interpreting research data are rare (Coad and Evans 2008) and rarer still for children under the

age of eight. Lack of engagement with young children in this context is rooted in assumptions about their capacity to cope with this aspect of research (Lundy, McEvoy and Byrne 2011). This implies that the process and way in which information is presented to the children needs to change. Directly involving the children in the process of data interpretation as co-researchers is, however, imperative to ensuring that the findings are grounded in the perspectives and experiences of the children themselves as opposed to reflecting adult interpretations of children's perspectives (Dockett et al. 2009). The approach adds to the credibility of the research (Fraser 2004) and produces a more nuanced understanding of the issues under investigation (Lundy and McEvoy 2009). In this case, child conferencing (Clark and Moss 2011) gave the children opportunities to interpret and explain their own data (Thomas and O'Kane 1998) and encouraged dialogue, joint analysis and learning.

Card sorting is a method commonly used in participatory research (O'Kane 2000). In order to make the activity accessible to the children, I wrote some key quotes from the discussion transcripts on pieces of card (for example, 'we only go outside at playtime'). I began reading these to the children until I had read a varied selection of about twelve cards. I then encouraged them to think about whether any of the quotes had similar themes or (in simplified terms) 'belonged together'. Quotes that 'belonged together' were placed in a sorting hoop. I then asked the children to think of a name for each group of information, for example 'rules'. I continued to read more cards for the children to sort (figures 4.1 and 4.2).

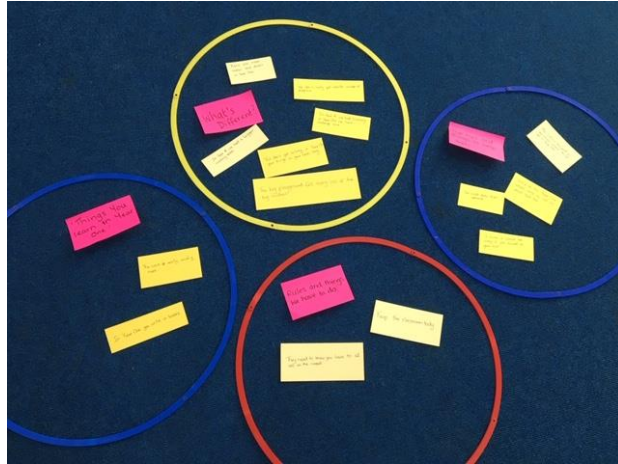


Figure 4.1 Children's data Sorting

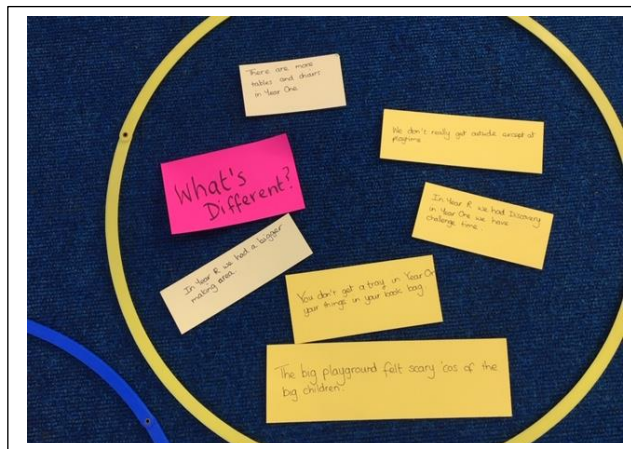


Figure 4.2 Children's data Sorting

This sorting process was already familiar to the children as we had used the approach several times before in the course of our projects. This made the activity much easier for them and me. In our project about the Queen, for example, the children had worked together to sort information statements about the Queen into groups and suggested titles (such as, 'Family', 'Homes', 'Pets') for each group.

The sorting activity generated lively discussion and debate when it came to some of the statements (for example, did 'we do lots of writing' belong in the hoop labelled 'Differences' or 'What we learn'?). This reinforced the fact that any form

of data categorisation (whether it be by child or adult) is always subjective and open to different interpretations (Lincoln and Guba 1985). Once we had sorted the quote cards we set about sorting some of the drawings and resources the children had made into the same categories. The sorting process provided a more nuanced understanding of the children’s thinking about transition and provided invaluable clarification of the true meaning behind some of the resources and comments.

Categories and themes are often generated within the context of a researcher’s prior constructs, preferences and biases (ibid). In sorting and presenting quotations of what the children say, researchers often impose their own analytical frameworks, categories and meanings on the data: possibly at the expense of considering other possible interpretations (Spyrou 2014). Using the themes chosen by the children (table 4.3), however, provided an element of triangulation to the sorting and coding process.

Theme selected by the children	Adult interpretation of theme
‘What’s different?’	(the differences between reception and Year 1): Knowledge and Discourse
‘Rules and things we have to do’	(Rules, rituals, routines and choice): Power, Structure and Control
‘Things you learn to do in Year 1’	(Progression in Learning): Power and Knowledge
‘Top tips and things to help them’	(Apprenticeship, expertise and brokerage): Knowledge and Empowerment

Table 4.3 *Children’s themes and Adult interpretations*

4.6.8 Stage Eight: Data analysis

The notion of validity in qualitative inquiry is complex (Creswell and Miller 2000). Lincoln and Guba (1985); Maxwell (1996); Merriam (1998) and others identify common procedures for establishing validity in qualitative research, including thick description, triangulation and peer reviews. Discussions about validity procedures, however, negate specific guidance as to why one procedure might be selected for use by researchers over other procedures. Creswell and Miller (2000) suggest that a researcher's choice of validity procedures is 'governed by two perspectives: the lens researchers choose to validate their studies and the researcher's paradigm assumptions' (Creswell and Miller 2000: 127).

In this research the data analysis stage was guided by the research questions and literature reviewed (Braun and Clarke 2006). The principal aim of my analysis was to begin to unpick some of the issues raised and to consider their implications within the process of transition. The data provided an illustration of what aspects of Year One were important to the experts. It also highlighted broader and more complex issues which were relevant to the transition process, including the experts' understanding of Year One practices and their ability to act as mentors.

Coded analysis based on the themes identified by the children during sorting (*Stage Eight*) enabled me to identify themes and link literature to data. The following Corpus of Data table (table 4.4) presents an overview of data collected and how it contributed to the research questions and the rigour of the research.

Research Questions	Type of Data	Amount of Data
<p>How do children recently transitioned to Year One perceive the ways in which power and knowledge relationships are constructed through the discourse and practices of Year One?</p> <p>How do children transform themselves in relation to others through the knowledge produced within power relations, discourse and practices at the time of transition?</p>	Transcriptions of discussions	27 (36 pages)
<p>How can those who have recently been involved in the transition from Reception to Year One use their recent experience of transition to help bridge the gap for the next cohort of children?</p>	<p>Child made resources</p> <p>Field notes</p> <p>Maps (showing how children moved around the classroom during orientation visits)</p> <p>Adult reflections</p>	<p>15</p> <p>29 post-its and 19 clip board notes</p> <p>5</p> <p>48 pages</p>
<p>How can knowledge of the next stage of learning be used as a tool with which to begin to readdress power imbalances during transition?</p>	<p>Transcriptions of discussions</p> <p>Field notes</p> <p>Adult reflections</p> <p>Child made resources</p> <p>Videos</p>	9
<p>How does encouraging Year One children to use their expertise to help others impact on the experts?</p>	<p>Transcriptions of discussions</p> <p>Field notes</p> <p>Adult reflections</p>	

Table 4.4 *Corpus of Data*

The research methods generated a substantial body of data, including transcribed discussions, field notes, adult reflections, videos, maps and the resources made by the children. This led to some reduction and selection (Miles and Huberman 1994). Even so it was unrealistic to think that the children would be able to sort all of the data into the categories they had identified. When all transcripts had been checked for accuracies the transcripts were uploaded into the computer assisted

software (*Atlas.ti*) which supports researchers in undertaking systematic coding and categorising of data (Yin 2009). This tool enabled me to sort the remaining transcript data into categories selected by the children. It also supported the process of 'playing' with the data (Yin 2009: 129) and facilitated storage. I was aware, however, that any forms of analysis have their limitations. *Atlas.ti*, for example, (like all forms of research data analysis) relies heavily on the interpretation of the researcher. It is the researcher who decides upon the criteria for the categorisation of data and what data fits into which category. Analysis can reflect a researcher's expectations or what they want to find (Robbins 2003).

Children's voices in research are always subject to adult interpretations (Spyrou 2011). A researcher may consciously or unconsciously act as a gatekeeper of children's voices when presenting or interpreting them (Leonard 2007). I was equally cognisant that children's voices are mediated by discourses and situated within the 'discursive fields of power which produce them' (Spyrou 2014: 159) and that my own analyses and interpretations of their voices were also the product of discourses (Mitchell 2009). Mazzei and Jackson (2009) urge researchers to consider epistemologies and power relations in data generation and analysis and to seek more productive ways for representation.

Although efficient for coding and categorising transcript data, I found *Atlas.ti* to be less helpful when processing the diverse range of other data, for example children's resources. Multi-sensory methods do not eliminate the problems associated with the representation of children's voices (Spyrou 2011). Images, for example, are 'selections produced out of a number of possibilities and, like all other texts, cannot be authentic depictions of social reality' (Spyrou 2011: 154). Therefore, interpretations of images are always selective and positioned (Komulainen 2007). Fasoli (2003) draws attention to the possibility of multiple interpretations. It could be argued, therefore, that responses which reflect

particular issues in this research may have been implicitly included within other categories, thereby creating the illusion that they are not relevant. Issues of researcher subjectivity (Berk 2001; Green and Hill 2005) and confirmation bias (Scott 1996) inevitably affected my interpretations of the data. On-going discussions with the children about their multi-modal resources reduced these issues but I continued to acknowledge and reflect upon this limitation throughout the research process.

My growing lack of confidence in the efficiency of *Atlas.ti* may well have reflected my inexperience of using the software. As the data analysis progressed, however, I found myself in a 'swampy lowland..... of confusing messes' (Schon 1983:42), 'working without rules in order to find out the rules of what (I) had done' (Appignanesi and Garrett (1995:50). In order to bring myself closer to the data I reverted to more naturalistic forms of analysis.

An important aspect of my research was my parallel journey of transition ([see p.332](#)). Reflections on my own experiences, therefore, played a key role in my analysis of the data ([see p.306](#)). Referring closely to my reflective journal throughout the data analysis stage, I used my journey as a powerful research tool. This enabled me to draw links between my own experiences and those of the children.

4.6.9 The Final Analysis Methodology

In order to sort the data and begin to elicit the themes upon which my analysis would focus, I carried out a four Stage process:

Stage One: I transferred the themes chosen by the children during sorting into a table (Figure 4.3). I then assigned a highlight colour code to each of the themes chosen by the children (Figure 4.3).

Theme selected by the children
'What's different?'
'Rules and things we have to do'
'Things you learn to do in Year One'
'Top tips and things to help them'

Figure 4.3 Colour coded themes chosen by the children

Stage Two: Using the themes as a point of reference, I read through each transcription (for example, transcriptions of group discussions, expert/novice interactions, discussions with children about their resources) at least twice. I then highlighted statements that were representative of the same theme in the relevant colour code (see, for example, Figure 4.4). I used the same system of colour coding to analyse other research evidence, for example, my reflective journal and post-it notes.

James: I was happy about moving up to Year One. I knew we could learn new things and there were new things to play with. I like the Lego. We didn't get Lego in Year R. There's computer games too and in Year One you get to write in books and go in the big playground. I knew Year 1 would be good because I went to the Queen's tea party.

Polly: I wasn't sure at first.

Mary: I felt a bit strange. It's different in Year One.

Teacher: How is it different?

Mary: You don't get a tray in Year One. You leave your things in your book bag and it goes in a box. I had fairies and princess stickers on my Year R tray.

Oliver: I had dinosaurs on mine.

Polly: Sometimes my book bag gets put into the wrong box and I loose it. Special things don't get lost so much in Year R 'cos they go in your tray.

Teacher: Is there anything else that's different?

Billy: You have to do a lot more writing in Year One.

Oliver: Lots of writing. Much more than in Year R.

Polly: We do a lot more maths because we are older and smarter

Billy: They do lots and lots of sitting and learning in Year Two

Polly: You have to learn more when you get older

James: In Year R it's fun work. In Year One its middle fun work. But in Year Two there's no fun at all

Figure 4.4 Example of transcription colour coding

Stage Three: As I read through the transcriptions, I began to identify common concepts within themes, for example, many of the statements I had highlighted in pink (*Things you learn to do in Year One*) related to progression in learning. In order to create sub-categories that reflected the emerging concepts, I made two

copies of each transcription. I kept one complete copy so that the data remained in context and cut up the duplicate copy so that I could physically group the statements into these subcategories (Figure 4.5).

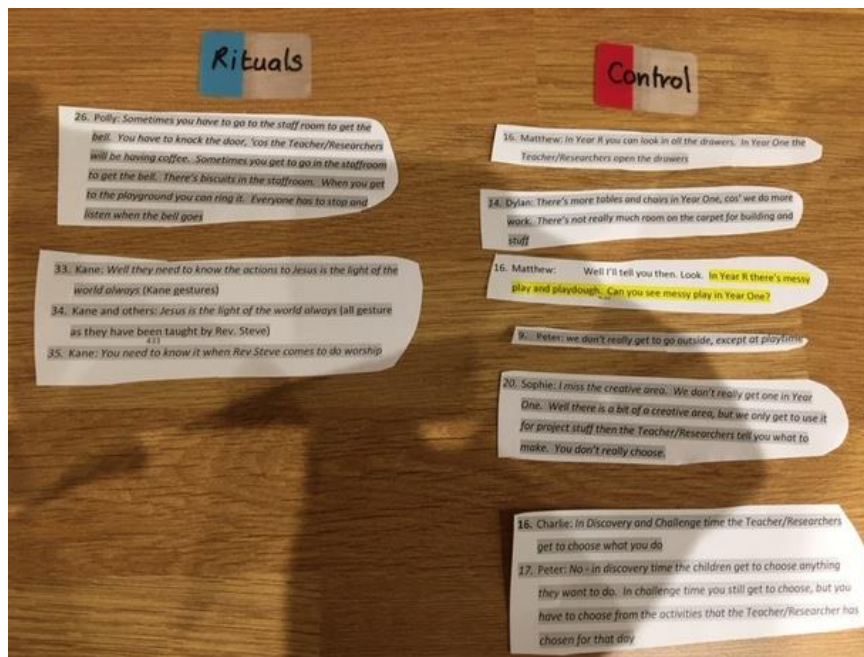


Figure 4.5 Process of identifying common concepts within themes

Stage Four: Once I had identified common concepts, I returned to my *Literature Review* in search of theoretical links that would support my interpretation of the children's themes and provide a framework for analysis. In Table 4.4 I bring together the children's themes with the concepts of Discontinuity, Control, Knowledge and Brokerage and theory. I used this framework to signpost myself to the relevant literature during the analysis process as well as to support the structuring of my Findings/Analysis.

	Theme selected by the children	Adult interruption of theme
D (Discontinuity)	'What's different?'	(The differences between Reception and One): Knowledge and Discourse
C (Control)	'Rules and things we have to do'	(Rules, rituals, routines and choice): Power, Structure and Control
K (Knowledge)	'Things you learn to do in Year One'	(Progression in learning): Power and Knowledge
B (Brokerage)	'Top tips and things to help them'	(Apprenticeship, expertise and brokerage): Knowledge and Empowerment

Table 4.4 Themes, common concepts, theoretical links

4.7 Chapter Four Summary

In this chapter I justified my decision to use a naturalistic research paradigm and defended the quality of the research methodology. I have also problematised the complex notion of participatory research from a number of perspectives and critiqued a range of participatory methods. This process has enabled me to clarify my methodological approach, rule out inappropriate methods and identify child-friendly methods that are relevant to my research context. My newly informed knowledge of participatory methodology and methods has permitted me to select ethically responsible and efficient research tools that will empower myself and the children to answer the research questions. Part of my commitment to children's voice, however, is ensuring that the children's contribution to this study develops the participatory nature of the research further than a level of participation via user-friendly research tools. My intention is to empower the children to use their individual expertise to consciously influence the direction of the study. Thus, I am compelled to present an open-ended and reflexive methodology which will be enhanced and led by the children. As this is a flexible

design study where qualitative information is produced, the 'data and analysis are intimately interconnected' (Robson 2002: 510). In chapters Five, Six and Seven, therefore, the findings that were generated by this innovative approach are analysed as they are presented.

Findings and Analysis: Overview

The innovative methodology used in this research generated rich data which is intimately interconnected to the analysis (Robson 2002: 510). Consequently, in the following three chapters the findings of the research are aggregated with analysis of those findings. [Table 4.8](#) provides a summary of how the key themes are presented in these chapters. In chapters *Four* and *Five* I group the findings under headings which demonstrate patterns and particular points of commonality or difference (Denscombe 1998) within the following themes:

*'What's different?' (The differences between Reception and Year One):
Knowledge and Discourse*

*'Rules and things we have to do' (Rules, rituals, routines and choice):
Power, Structure and Control*

*'Things you learn to do in Year One' (Progression in learning): Power and
Knowledge*

*'Top tips and things to help them' (Apprenticeship, expertise and
brokerage): Knowledge and Empowerment*

The themes shown in italic text above were suggested by the children during the data review stage. They are analogous to my own interpretations of the data (which are represented above in bracketed non-italic text). The themes link closely with the research aims and questions. Throughout the findings and analysis, therefore, I am able to guide the reader through the evidence as it relates to the aims and questions of the research. The evidence presented within the themes 'What's different?'; 'Rules and things we have to do' and 'Things you learn to do in Year One' in Chapter Five, for example, provided an insight into the children's perspectives of their transition from the Reception to Year One within the context of power/knowledge relationships and thus forms section one of the data. The evidence presented within the theme 'Top tips and things to help them' forms Chapter Six of the findings. This data enabled me to identify how the

children's findings and experiences could be used to support new groups of children moving into Key Stage One. The unbracketed non-italic text above indicates the theoretical concepts I chose to concentrate on in more detail in each themed sub-section.

In dividing these chapters into themed sub-sections I remain aware that the research data represents the different ideas, perceptions, skills and voices of twenty-nine individual children. Likewise, although particular themes lend themselves to particular theoretical concepts, all of the themes link in some way to all of the theoretical concepts that make up my theoretical framework. Entangled complexities produce data which is not linear and sections inevitably overlap (Lorenc, Lambert, Petticrew, Melendex-Torres, Thomas, Thomas, O'Mara-Eves and Richardson 2016). In concurrence with Miles and Huberman (2009), however, I defend the quality of the research design. The findings and analysis I present here are 'a source of well-grounded, rich descriptions and explanations of processes' in the local context of my school (Miles and Huberman 2009: 26). My research design has enabled me to preserve chronological flow and to clarify 'precisely which events lead to which consequences' (ibid: 26) thus revealing 'fruitful explanations' which have led me and my colleagues to a better understanding of transition in our school from the children's perspective. The knowledge and understanding I have gained from my findings and analysis provides an informed starting point for reform of our school's transition process.

In Chapter Seven (*Future and Parallel Transitions*) I present and analyse the findings of my discussion with a small group of the children who had been involved in the pilot study at our local junior school and consider how these children's participation in the research impacted on their future transitions. This chapter also includes personal reflections on my own journey of transition from Reception to Year One and how these relate to the children's experiences and

theoretical frameworks discussed.

Throughout the Findings and Analysis (chapters *Five, Six* and *Seven*), I draw on the combined theoretical framework discussed in my review of literature ([Figure 3.1](#)) to critically analyse the theoretical and methodological links between children's participation in research, children's voice and children's perceptions of themselves as experts.

Chapter Five: Children's perspectives of the transition from Reception to Year One		
Aim:		
1. To critically analyse the children's perspectives of their transition from Reception to Year One within the context of power/knowledge relationships		
Questions:		
a. How do children recently transitioned to Year One perceive the ways in which power and knowledge relationships are constructed through the discourse and practices of Year One?		
b. How do the children transform themselves in relation to others through the knowledge produced within power relations, discourse and practices at the time of transition?		
'What's different?' (The differences between Reception and One): Knowledge and Discourse	'Rules and things we have to do' (Rules, rituals, routines and choice): Power, Structure and Control	'Things you learn to do in Year One' (Progression in learning): Power and Knowledge
Chapter Six: How the children used their findings and experiences of transition to support new groups of children moving into Year One		
Objectives:		
2. To critically analyse how children's experiences can be used to support new groups of children moving into Year One (<i>Research Question c and d</i>)		
3. To use considerations of power and knowledge to analyse the theoretical and methodological links between children's participation in research, children's voice and children's perceptions of themselves as experts (<i>Research Questions b, d and e</i>)		
4. To develop a framework for the participation of 'expert' children in Year One in researching and disseminating ways to support young children facing transition (<i>Research Question c and d</i>)		
Questions:		
c. How can those who have recently been involved in the transition from Reception to Year One use their recent experience of transition to help to bridge the gap for the next cohort of children?		
d. How can knowledge of the structure of the next stage of learning be used as a tool with which to begin to readdress power imbalances during transition?		
e. How does encouraging Year One children to use their expertise to help others impact on the experts?		
'Top tips and things to help them' (Apprenticeship, expertise and brokerage): Knowledge and Empowerment		
Chapter Seven: Future and Parallel Transitions		
Discussions with the Junior School Children	Personal reflections on my own journey of transition	

Table 4.8 Summary of how the key themes are presented in chapters five, six and seven

Chapter 5. Findings and Analysis. Children's perspectives of the transition from Reception to Year One

5.1 Introduction to Chapter Five

Ashton (2008) stresses the importance of listening to children's voices at times of transition. Clark and Moss (2001 2005) argue that children are best positioned to create a 'living picture' of the transition process. The main aim of this research is to improve the transition process in our school. In this chapter, therefore, I explore the children's perspectives of the transition from Reception to Year One in order that their views may be used as a guide to action (Borland 2001). I discuss the findings of the research alongside the analysis of those findings.

5.2 Summary of Chapter Five Sections

Included in this chapter is the data that was thematically analysed into the following themes:

- *'What's different?' (The differences between Reception and Year One): Knowledge and Discourse*

In this section I consider some of the differences that were important to this particular cohort of children; the discourse and affordances that contributed to their perceptions and pre-conceptions of those differences and how individual children and groups of children perceived the process of change. With reference to the dynamics of power and control, I also explore how differences the children encountered as a result of transition contributed to their positioning and feelings of empowerment or disempowerment.

- *'Rules and things we have to do' (Rules, rituals, routines and choice): Power, Structure and Control*

In this section I draw on the work of Bernstein (1975) and Bronfenbrenner (1989) to explore both the positive and negative effects of structure and control in our school and how these can lead to children's feelings of empowerment or disempowerment.

- *'Things you learn to do in Year One' (Progression in learning): Power and Knowledge*

In this section, I examine the children's perspectives of their learning and explore the empowering and disempowering effects of the Year curriculum and pedagogy

5.3 Theoretical underpinning

Throughout this chapter I use the combined theoretical framework identified in Chapter Two ([Figure 3.1 p.63](#)) to analyse the children's perspectives of their experiences in Year One (and Reception) in terms of the dynamics of power and control operating between adults and children. I use:

- Foucault's (1985) perceptions of power to unpick the relationship between power, knowledge and discourse.
- Bronfenbrenner's conceptualisations of ecology to understand the multi-directional power relations between the children and their context.
- Giddens's theory of structuration to facilitate a deeper understanding of how our school structures can become modalities of control and disempower children during transition
- Bernstein's conceptualisations of rules and routines to highlight contrasts and complexities within our school community practices and to interrogate the relationship between power, knowledge and discourse within the context of school and transition.
- Gibson's (1979) theoretical framework of affordances to analyse the children's experiences in Year One with reference to control over their time and space.

- I also use Devine’s model relating to the structuring of adult-child relations within school (Devine 2002).

5.4 ‘What’s different?’ (The differences between Reception and Year One): Knowledge and Discourse

The transition from Reception to Year One is particularly synonymous with change. It is, therefore, understandable that children’s perceptions of this important transition often focus on the differences they encounter. Children’s insights into the incongruence between play based learning and more formal learning has been widely researched (Oxfordshire County Council 2006, 2009; O’Kane and Hayes 2007; Fisher 2010; Ofsted 2017; TACTYC 2017). The differences between Reception and Year One were also a pertinent factor in the findings of this research and indicative of the children’s perceptions of the transition.

5.4.1 Preconceptions

Initial discussions revealed what the children remembered of their feelings at the time of their transition to Year One. These feelings were closely related to the differences between the two key stages. Similarly to O’Kane and Hayes’s (2007) study ([p.106](#)), group discussions highlighted the mixture of feelings the children had experienced during transition. These included worry, anxiety, nervousness and excitement. Likewise, the children were excited about some aspects of Year One, including new games, computers and ‘tea parties’. However, they worried about other aspects of Year One, including ‘harder work’, ‘stricter adults’ and ‘the big playground’ ([Appendix Four](#)). The children were unclear how they knew the work would be harder and the adults stricter – according to Clare they ‘just

thought it would be' ([Appendix Seven](#)). This caused me to consider what it was about the discourse of Year One, our school and the wider environment that led to the children's pre-conceptions.

The children's initial perceptions of Year One were likely to have been shaped by a range of discourse factors (Dockett and Perry 2003). Their interaction with older children (Fabian 2002), for example, had a role to play in their knowledge of Year One, as did their processing of the environmental affordances (Giddens 1979). Later in my findings I consider how the classroom layout may have been an affordance that cued the children's knowledge that work in Year One would be harder (Devine 2002) (see p.236). As well as analysing the affordances of different physical features of the environment (Kytta 2002, 2004), it is also important to consider the affordances of the social and emotional context of transition (Good 2007). Clare, for example, said that she had felt worried and nervous because she 'didn't know if things would be the same' and she 'didn't know where everything was in Year One'. She also said that she 'felt nervous of new people' and 'was worried about play time in the big play ground' ([Appendix Six](#)). James, on the contrary, appeared to relish the opportunity to experience things that were unfamiliar and different ([Appendix Five](#)).

I was happy about moving up to Year One 'cos I knew we could learn new things and there were new things to play with..... and in Year One you get to write in books... and go in the big playground

Children differ in their personalities and resilience to change. Every individual's overall sense of agency, however, is shaped by their cumulative experiences which might also affect their response to affordances (McInnes et al. 2011). With this in mind it was pertinent to consider other factors which may well have contributed to Clare and James' opposing views on the transition. In contrast to Clare's experiences, James attends breakfast and after school club at the school where he mixes with children from other year groups. He also belongs to the

football club and Beavers. It was likely that James' 'contacts' in other communities had broadened his knowledge of Year One discourse and practice (Lave and Wenger 1991). His previous experiences and circumstances, therefore, affected his positioning and empowered him with more confidence than Clare during the transition to Year One. What divided Clare and James in their responses to transition was a feeling of knowing, (or in Clare's case not knowing) (Foucault 1984). At the time of their transition, however, both Clare and James based their pre- conceptions of Year One on received or *connaissance* knowledge (Foucault 1984). It was only now that they had had time to construct knowledge for themselves based on their experiences and relationships (*savoir* knowledge) in Year One that they began to understand themselves in relation to others (*ibid*). During transition the children had been subjected to the discourses of Year One which established the 'norms' that they had gradually taken on as their own (Olssen 2006).

5.4.2 Spot the Difference

A piece of evidence which particularly highlighted the incongruence between the two year groups as an issue was Matthew's 'Spot the difference' photographs ([Appendix Nine](#)). Due to the fact that these contained images of children and thus raised concerns relating to confidentiality, I chose not to present the photographs in the findings. I refer to them here, however, as an important source of evidence. During the experts' resource sharing visit to the Reception classroom, Matthew used the photographs to exemplify some of differences between the two learning environments. In Reception, for example, Matthew pointed out that there was more 'messy play', 'playdough', 'their own outside area', a 'comfortable sofa' and 'trays for the children's special things'. Whilst Year One had 'more tables and chairs', 'a bigger white board', 'challenge trolleys', 'only a little bit outside' and 'no trays' ([Appendix Nine](#)).

5.4.3 Affordances

The 'trays' were mentioned by several children during discussions, implying their significance to the children ([Appendix Five](#)). In Reception each child had their own named tray in which to put their belongings and 'special' things. The trays were the children's own personal space and they could choose what to put in their tray. Some children personalised the front of their tray with stickers and pictures and the trays were easily accessible to the children throughout the day. A lack of space in Year One, however, meant that the children kept their things in book bags that were stored *en masse* in boxes. This meant that the book bags (and the children's things they contained) were less accessible to the children. They were also identical in look (apart from an array of keyrings which children or parents sometimes added to a book bag to make it more distinguishable from the others). The children's references to the trays caused me to consider why they were important. The trays formed part of the discourse of Reception and the lack of trays formed part of the discourse of Year One. Using the theory of affordances to analyse the discourse of both classrooms suggested that the children absorbed cues from the environment (such as the trays) which they then used to assess classroom situations (Howard et al. 2003; McInnes et al. 2010). The trays were an affordance (Gibson 1979; Gibson and Pick 2000) of Reception. The sense of individuality, ownership, identity and agency that a 'personal', 'special' and 'named' tray afforded the children contributed to their feelings of belonging and self. This had been taken away from them when they moved to Year One, resulting in a loss of identity and personal space. The book bags felt much less as though they belonged to the children. Such detail highlighted the complexities of practices within the school community and the contrasts that exist between communities.

5.4.4 Work Expectations

The difference in workload and expectations in Reception and Year One were a prominent feature of the children's discussions. This resonates with Einarsdottir's (2013) research which found that many children worried about increased academic study and sitting still when they moved from play-based to more formal learning (p.107). The proportions of Ben's map and his verbal explanation (Figure 5.1) exemplified the increased emphasis on 'work' over play in Year One which many of the children perceived to be a key difference between Reception and One.

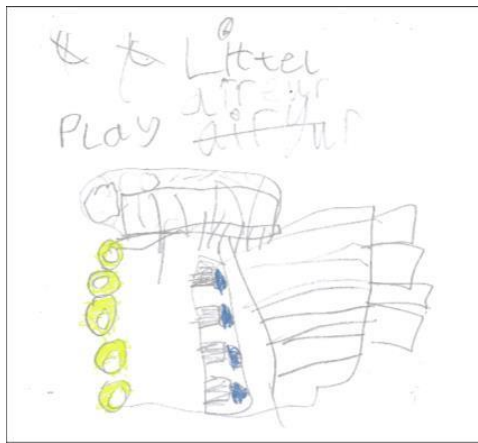


Figure 5.1 Ben's map of the Year One classroom for the novices

Ben's explanation of his map: 'This is where we do our work (pointing) and this is the play area. It's smaller 'cos we don't play as much in Year One'

Many of the children commented on the increased expectations for writing in Year One (figure 5.2) ([Appendix Five](#))

You have to do a lot more writing in Year One' (Billy)

Get your letters the right way round (Arthur)

Knowing the children as I did, I could understand how this change could cause some anxiety or pressure (especially for some of the younger boys). In Reception the emphasis had been very much on enticing reluctant writers to ‘write’ out of their own choice, as exemplified by Clare’s comments about the Reception writing area:

The writing area in Year R is bigger and you have lots of interesting things to write with – Angry Bird pens and glitter pens and stuff like that. In Year One, we usually just write with pencils ([Appendix Seven](#))

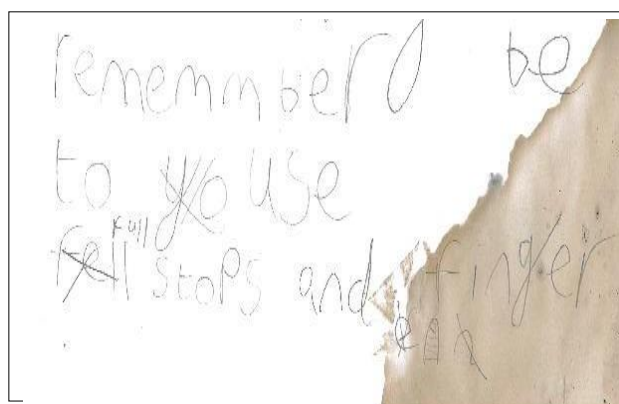


Figure 5.2 Extract from William’s *Top Tips for The Year Rs* book
William’s reading of his writing: ‘Remember to use full stops and finger spaces’

5.4.6 Rites of Passage

Not all of the children’s comments relating to transition and difference were negative. In some cases, ‘different’ appeared to represent for the children ‘grown up’ and more privilege. Included in the children’s list of differences, for example, were ‘grown-up games’, ‘your own art book’, ‘Roald Dahl books without pictures’, ‘PE’, ‘Bingo’ and computers (figure 5.3). The children referred to these features of Year One in positive terms, as though they were the ‘perks’ of being older or ‘rites

of passage' (Van Gennepe 1960; Campbell Clark 2000).



Figure 5.3 Dylan's Welcome to Year 1 poster Dylan's reading: 'You can play with the computers'

Ben's recollection of the transition to Year One was particularly reassuring

When you get into Year One it's not as hard as you think. I mean you think it's going to be hard and the adults are going to be stricter but it's not really. You get used to doing more work and the adults are nice and friendly ([Appendix Four](#))

Ben's experience reinforced the empowering effects of knowledge.

Reflecting particularly on Ben and Clare's preconceptions of Year One which related to 'stricter adults' ([p.191](#)), I started to consider how this assumption had been formed. Our school has an established behaviour management strategy which commences in Reception and runs throughout the school. If a child is behaving unacceptably in class they are discreetly presented with a 'stop' card. This gives them the opportunity to stop the unacceptable behaviour without further sanctions. If the stop card warning is ignored and the behaviour continues, the adult may ask the child to 'move their name'. This indicates that they will 'lose' five minutes of their play time. If a child has their name moved more than once on the

same day they are asked to go to a different classroom for five minutes in order to reflect and observe positive behaviour. Reception children spend five minutes in Year One and Year One children go to Year Two. The practice presents Year One to the Reception children as somewhere you have to go when you have done the 'wrong thing'. This inevitably positions Year One and the Year One adults within a discourse of ordinance thus contributing to the myth that the Year One adults are 'stricter' than the adults in Reception. Later in this chapter I consider also how school discourse supports the supposition that work is harder in Year One ([p.235](#)).

I began to see the importance of interactions between microsystems (for example, Year One and Reception) during transition; how the 'expectations, perceptions and experiences' (Dockett and Perry 2003: 6) fostered during these interactions could influence the transition process and the important role the experts played (through their research) in presenting Year One to the novices. Experts like Ben had the potential to reinforce the existing discourse and 'truths' or to dispel some of the myths that had become accepted as truth and change or adapt the discourse that surrounded Year One, thereby, developing a more positive approach to transition. This reinforced the way in which children and adults influence the context in which they live (Bronfenbrenner and Morris 1998; Pianta et al. 1999) and the ways in which those contexts impact on experiences (Dockett and Perry 2003).

Although the children identified and commented extensively on the broad range of differences between life in Year One and life in Reception none of the children directly questioned or challenged these differences. Lack of any such commentary appeared to indicate a general acceptance that this was the way it is in Year One and general Year One practice was (on the whole) non-negotiable. The limitations on children's choice were indicative of limitations on children's voice and remained an unspoken reference to power and control. I did not feel it appropriate at this stage to ask the children directly about their perceptions of

how powerful they thought the teachers were in relation to their own positions. Whether the children were or were not explicitly aware of it, however, there seemed, to be an embedded discourse of subordination – in which they viewed themselves as individuals with subordinate status in the classroom (Devine 2002). I conjectured that self-perceptions of their subordinate positioning in Year One may also have negative implications for their perception of themselves as ‘active contributors’ (Devine 2002: 304) to the schooling process, thereby undermining their agency and the right to express (and have heard) their individual voices. This could account for their generally passive, non-challenging acceptance of their structural positioning in relation to adults and ‘the way things were’ in Year One. Contrary to recent shifts in the way in which children’s status, rights and agency are viewed in some domains of society (arguably not the Department of Education, however), it appeared that the children’s identification of their own agency was influenced by wider, historical discourses which still position children as subordinate (James et al. 1990; Qvortrup 1994). This highlighted the interrelationship between discourse, agency and practice in the structuration of adult-child relations in school.

Knowledge and power are intrinsically linked (Foucault 1980). During a time of transition individuals enter into a phase of new and intense learning. They are reliant on more experienced others to teach them what they need to know. This period of apprenticeship positions them as less powerful members of the community and their positioning on the balance of power remains lower until they have accumulated the knowledge base required by the next stage. Feelings of disempowerment at the novice stage inevitably result in a dip in self-confidence, agency and a general acceptance of the ingrained practices of the new setting. It is only when a novice’s knowledge base strengthens that they begin to gain confidence, self-believe and the aptitude to question, negotiate, personalise and initiate change (as Polly exemplified through the strategies she devised to optimise creative time for the novices) (see p126) ([Appendix Ten](#)).

Discourse and knowledge of the next stage of learning plays a key role in how the children approached change and difference. Some children (like James and Ben) were empowered by change and difference (p.192). Others (like Clare) were disempowered (p.192). My findings inspired me to consider what other aspects of transition effected the children's positioning on the balance of power.

5.5 'Rules and things we have to do' (Rules, rituals, routines and choice): Power, Structure and Control

During the data sorting stage it became clear there was a significant amount of data relating the theme of '*Rules and things we have to do*'. The data included references to Year One rules, rituals and routines, as well as children's choice ([Appendix Five](#)). This implied a child's perspective of Year One as environment in which structure and control are important. Structure and control have connotations of authority. They are often used as tools to assert power and can, therefore, be disempowering to those on the lower end of the balance of power.

5.5.1 Rules

Bernstein (1990) equates a good understanding of the setting rules with children's ability to access the practices of school and succeed during each stage of their education. The experts frequently made reference to the rules they felt the novices needed to know when they arrived in Year One, for example, 'Listen to the teacher' and 'Keep the classroom tidy' ([Appendix Five](#)). This implied that rules mattered to the children and (from the children's perspectives) adapting to the rules of their new community was an important aspect of the transition process. Vartuli and Everett (1998) note that teacher and child perceptions about rules can vary considerably. Some of the 'rules' which the children mentioned were (in my

eyes) classroom procedures not rules, yet the children perceived them to be rules (for example, 'choose your lunch when you get to school') ([Appendix Seven](#)). This suggested that procedures and rules had become muddled within implicit discourse of Year One (Bernstein 1975) leading to misinterpretations and confusion.

All of the children's comments relating to rules were of a *social* nature (Bernstein 1996). They encompassed ways of behaving in the classroom (or *regulative discourse*). This exemplified the *expressive* culture of our school (Bernstein 1975). According to Brooker (2002: 90), social rules are an 'essential aspect of the social and cultural capital of a pupil'. The experts were mostly united in their observations about the rules. This created a consensus across the community. There was, for example, an agreement amongst all the experts about rules relating to our school values, for example, 'Be a good friend to your class mates' ([Appendix Five](#)), 'Look after our toys and games' ([Appendix Four](#)). The children's awareness of rules suggested an awareness of boundaries set and of the behavioural expectations of the setting (EYFS 2008). The recognition of agreed codes of behaviour for groups of people to work together harmoniously (ibid) appeared to indicate the experts' sense of what it means to belong to a community of practice (Wenger 1998).

When the experts related a rule it was often preceded by 'Don't...', such as, 'Don't be silly on the carpet' ([Appendix Seven](#)). I would suggest that the authoritarian tone of such direct instructions also demonstrated the experts' claim on an elevated place for themselves within school community hierarchy. Sometimes expression of a rule would be followed by clarification, for example,

Make sure you find a listening spot on the carpet so that you can do your best learning ([Appendix Seven](#))

make sure that you put paper in the white bin so that it can be recycled

and your fruit waste in the grey bin so it can go on the compost’
([Appendix Seven](#))

Always remember to choose your lunch when you come into school. If you forget the dinner ladies will not know if you’ve bought your own lunch or if you are having school lunch’ ([Appendix Seven](#))

This highlighted the experts’ understanding of the rules and why some specific practices operated within the community. I was reminded that Bernstein equates a good understanding of rules to future success at school (Bernstein 1975). From Bernstein’s perspective, the experts’ in depth knowledge and understanding of the rules of our school community suggested that there was strong classification and framing within our pedagogy (Bernstein 1990, 1996). My initial response to this finding was one of concern. I questioned the necessity of some many rules and wondered if adults in our school were too authoritarian and rule focused. The children’s reaction to rules appeared to be one of acceptance which could have suggested that they view school as a hierarchical institution. This caused me to consider if they had they already assessed their place within the context of school and encouraged me to explore further their perceptions of the power balances within our community.

Some of the experts voiced perceptions of rules that were unrealistic for their age (such as ‘Sit still on the carpet’) ([Appendix Five](#)) and rules that were unquantifiable and intangible (such as ‘Do good learning’ and ‘Get on with your work’) ([Appendix Five](#)) but these unhelpful perceptions of the rules were generally few and far between. Daren’s comment that in Year One there were ‘Not so many chances if you do something wrong’ ([Appendix Four](#)) implied that there was a heightening of the threshold between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour when the children moved into Key Stage One. If this was the case, I wondered why it was that we allowed for some self-regulation and ‘mistake making’ by the Reception children but expected the Year One children (who were only a fraction older) to internalise the rules and self-regulate. Brooker (2002: 77) presents the argument that ‘weak

framing of the regulative discourse in classrooms frequently conceals strong though unspoken expectations about appropriate behaviour'. This implies that invisible (or implicit) boundaries can make it harder for children to access school because the rules are not made explicit. Unspoken expectations are, after all, hard to comply with. It could be argued that the fact that these children were aware of the rules helped them to settle into Year One. Hence, strong classification and framing and the transparency of our pedagogy (at least with regard to the rules of our community) might have been supporting the transition process. Rules 'can only be challenged by those who have identified them' (Brooker 2002: 121) and, if I was to follow through with my commitment to children's voice, I needed to (at some point) enable these children to enter into negotiation and dialogue about the rules of our community.

Within Bronfenbrenner's ecological model of transition (Bronfenbrenner 1998; Bronfenbrenner and Morris 1998), in which links between microsystems enable children to influence and make sense of their communities, I could infer that the experts' Foundation Stage experience of rules enabled them to access the practices of the whole school community. Washing hands before snack, for example, was a common rule in both communities. Furthermore, it was likely that their experiences in other microsystems (such as, their pre-school or home) had contributed to the shaping of school community rules. (The raised hand signal, for example, was a strategy introduced by the Reception staff in order to communicate that they wanted a peer to stop any behaviour that was negatively affecting them. The experts continued to use this strategy in Year 1). I felt it was inevitable that the new cohort of children would begin to influence and re-shape the rules (Bronfenbrenner and Morris 1998). My worry, however, was that, by over-emphasising the rules of Year One, the experts would unsettle or frighten the novices. At this point in the research, I felt that we were walking a fine line. Although I wanted to involve the experts in bridging the gap between communities of practice, I also wanted to ensure that the novices had the

confidence to cross that bridge. I was once again experiencing what Usher (1996) describes as a tension between my role as a teacher and my role as a researcher. Honouring my commitment to children's voice and trusting the children to come up with a solution, I approached the children for their ideas on how to overcome this problem. Several children suggested that they should 'only tell the new children about the really important rules'. This led to in depth discussions about which rules were most important. Mary, for example, suggested that rules that keep you safe were most important, such as 'don't run in the classroom'. Polly, on the other hand, thought that rules which helped you to 'do good learning' were more important, for example, 'listening to the teacher'. James suggested that we should focus on passing on the rules that related to our school values of *Friendship, Openness, Responsibility, Endurance and Trust* ([Appendix Five](#)).

5.5.2 Routines and Rituals

Routines and rituals play an important role in the culture of school communities and Year One routines and rituals were a key feature in many of the children's resources and discussions. This illustrated their perspectives of Year One and their awareness of community practices. Unifying rituals (like 'Worship') ([Appendix Seven](#)) epitomised what Bernstein (1971) referred to as 'expressive order', whilst daily Phonics (or 'reading groups') ([Appendix Four](#)) epitomised 'instrumental order' (ibid). Many of the rituals mentioned by the children were adult imposed and exemplary of a *stratified* modality of control (Bernstein 1990). They were determined by those in power (Moss 2010).

Formulas and procedures can hide broader meanings in blind sequences of operations and may lead to the illusion that one fully understands the processes it describes (Wenger 1998). Thus, I deliberated if the children fully understood why they were following some of our rituals. For example, the children were well

aware that in worship they had to '*be quiet*' when an adult talked and sit with their '*legs crossed*' ([Appendix Seven](#)), but did they (or the adults for that matter) understand why?

The notion of *reification* (Barton and Hamilton 2005) can prevent community members from achieving full understanding of community practices (Wenger 1998) and can result in communities of practice that are forever recycling old and tired practice (Edwards 2000). The culture of every school includes systems and habits which people carry out unquestioningly on a daily basis (Robinson 2015). Schools frequently do things because they have always done them (Robinson 2015) and they often fail to recognise other ways of doing things (Moss 2010). This can impact negatively on those from marginalised communities, whilst affording positive advantages to those who already belong to the community for which schools stand (*ibid*). Brice Heath (1982) suggests that this enables white middle class children to transit more successfully through school. Daily worship (for example) ([Appendix Seven](#)) is a defining feature of our church school and our school culture is grounded in Christian values. Children who attend our school, however, come from a broad range of backgrounds and only a small proportion of their families are practicing Christians. This caused me to reflect upon whether these rituals were truly representative of the communities from which children came (Moss 2010).

Central to discussions around marginalisation in school is the notion of 'funds of knowledge' (Brice Heath 1984: 148). Moll, Amanti, Neff and Gonzalez (1992: 132-141) define 'funds of knowledge' as

the skills and knowledge that have been historically and culturally developed to enable an individual or household to function within a given culture

Studies such as those conducted by Gee (1996) and Heath (1983) suggest that

schools should recognise and nurture positive attitudes, culture and links between school and home. Critical interrogation of existing practices ensures that they remain relevant to the learners and their context (Moll et al. 1992). Delpit (1998) emphasises the importance of providing bridges to success for students not raised within 'the culture of power'. Integrating funds of knowledge into classroom activities creates a richer and more-highly scaffolded learning experience for students (Moll et al., 1992). Students and teachers benefit when unbiased ways of teaching bridge the gap between learning and the real world including multiple languages, accents, interactional styles and cultures (Hooks 2003).

During a group discussion about what the Reception children needed to know about Year One, Kane suggested that they needed to know that 'Jesus is the light of the world always' ([Appendix Seven](#)). When I encouraged him to elaborate on this point, he said 'Well, they need to know the actions to Jesus is the light of the world always'. He then began to show me the gestures that he had learnt from Reverend Steve in Worship to represent each of the words (for example, crossing himself when he said 'Jesus' and making a circular motion with his hands when he said 'always'). Other children in the discussion group also joined in with the words and actions. They were clearly very familiar with them. When I asked Kane why he thought that was important. He replied 'you need to know it when Reverend Steve comes to do worship' ([Appendix Seven](#)). In response to my question 'but what does it mean?' he said 'It just means Jesus is a big light – that's all'. I inferred that this particular ritual was not fully understood by the children. Rituals like worship, however, generally lead to relationship building and can result in the members of a community learning from each other (Wenger 1998). I concluded that reification in our community and its potential to support or delude participants in that practice warranted further investigation. I also began to consider what other institutionally imposed practices were ingrained in our community (Edwards 2000) and how these related to the children's voice (Kellett 2005) ([p.82](#)).

Another of our rituals which was particularly significant to the children was the collection of the school bell from the staff room at the end of play or lunchtime ([Appendix Five](#)). It is regular practice for the adults who are on 'playground duty' to ask one or two children to collect the bell from the staffroom and bring it back to the playground so that it can be rung to signify the end of playtime.

Traditionally, it is either a Year One or Year Two child who is entrusted with this responsibility. It is a sought-after responsibility amongst the older children. Polly explained:

You have to go to the staff room to get the bell. You have to knock the door, 'cos the teachers will be having coffee. Sometimes you get to go in the staffroom to get the bell. There's biscuits in the staffroom. When you get to the playground you can ring it. Everyone has to stop and listen when the bell goes ([Appendix Five](#))

This suggested that the bell ritual was a significant aspect of transition to the children for a number of reasons. Firstly, (as Billy put it) 'the teachers only choose children who are sensible and grown up to get the bell' ([Appendix Five](#)). Secondly (in the eyes of the children) there was a sense of mystique surrounding the staffroom which intrigued them and captured their interest. Thirdly, 'bell duty' culminated in the act of ringing the bell and stopping playtime, thereby elevating the bell ringer (for one brief moment) into the most powerful position on the playground.

Polly's observations implied that the children had developed their own folk lore surrounding the staffroom ([Appendix Five](#)). This included a myth that the staffroom was an out of bounds area for children, where the teachers partook in adult rituals such as 'coffee and biscuits'. Entry to the staffroom was perceived to be a status symbol reserved for the most powerful of our community. When I questioned the children as to why they thought the staffroom was reserved only for the teachers, they responded with 'it just is'. This implied that discourse

relating to the staffroom was embedded in the community; it had developed over time and it had become accepted as 'truth' (Foucault 1991). The knowledge the children perceived to be the truth about the staffroom was supported and maintained by practices that had become ingrained in our institution, for example, the closed staffroom door. By disseminating this discourse to the next cohort, the experts were strengthening this 'truth' (ibid). They were also reproducing information that supported and maintained existing power relations (Mills 2003). Although the dissemination of the staffroom and other 'truths' had been formalised for the purpose of our research, it occurred to me that 'truth' dissemination was a process that was already established informally amongst cohorts of children. This caused me to question what difference formalising this process through our research had made. Once again I turned to the children for an answer to my question, whereupon James pointed out that

you find out those things in the end but it can take a long time. If someone tells you at the beginning of the year it saves lots of time and trouble ([Appendix Five](#))

James's insightful response suggested to me that James recognised the benefits of informed knowledge of the community and was thus beginning to link power and knowledge.

Interestingly, there were some child-maintained myths which were not included in the 'official' advice they provided for the novices for the purposes of our research. The 'cameras in the corridor' myth, for example, (which I regularly overheard being quoted by the Year One and Two children in order to discourage the Reception children from running through school) remained an unofficial 'truth'. This caused me to question how the experts selected which 'truths' they disseminated to the novices in the course of our research and why certain truths were excluded. I conjectured that the 'cameras in the corridor' truth was a 'truth' that had developed over time (passed down from cohort to cohort). It had been maintained by those in power (the older children), however, it remained on the

border line between what was perceived to be believable and not believable. This uncertainty made the experts reluctant to document it as an 'official' truth. It could also have been that the experts recognised that the rule this truth policed was opaque and meaningless to younger children (who could not remember not to run in a big open corridor). Thus, due to the context and affordances of the space, it was a rule that was 'made to be broken'.

Although many of the Year One rituals had developed over time, not all were completely adult imposed and several examples of rituals that had been introduced or adapted by different cohorts of children were referenced in the children's resources and discussions. 'The Raffle', for example, was a hugely popular reward-based incentive that took place across the school at the end of each Friday. Over the course of the school week children's positive behaviour was recognised on a daily basis by placing their name in a hat. At the end of the week four names were pulled from the hat at random. These children were allowed to choose a prize from the raffle 'goodie bag'. At the beginning of the year several of the cohort had introduced the 'drum roll' as a precursor to the raffle. A collective 'drum roll' was achieved by children beating their hands on their knees in unison. Across the year it had also become customary to cheer when the winners were drawn out of the hat. The prominence of the raffle in several of the children's resources, for example Emily's *Top Tips* book (figure 5.4) indicated that it was perceived to be an important ritual, as was the protocol that had developed during the raffle draw. The process by which the raffle had been personalised by the cohort had unified the community (Bernstein 1971) and the experts were committed to passing on the traditions they had developed.



Figure 5.4 Emily's Top Tips book made for the novices

Emily's reading of her writing and explanation of her drawings: 'Try in the raffle. Cheer in the raffle. This girl is really trying to win. The other girl didn't win but she still cheered. The Quails need to know that you cheer for your friends even if you don't win'

Other relatively new but none the less important rituals included 'Stevie Wonder Time' and 'Kool and the Gang Time'. Jessica explained the rituals thus:

then it's someone's birthday we sing and dance to Stevie Wonder.....or if we are celebrating something or someone we dance to Kool and the Gang.....its a lot more funner than the Happy Birthday song they sing in the Year R, but the Year R teachers probably don't know about Kool and the Gang or Stevie Wonder

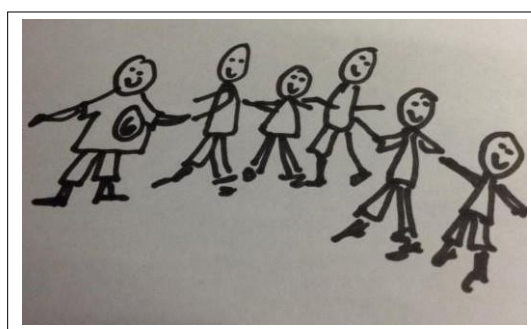


Figure 5.5 Stevie Wonder Time

Ben's illustration of 'Stevie Wonder Time' (figure 5.5) emphasised its importance and clarified details of event protocol for the novices so that the tradition could be passed on. Ben carefully explained that his illustration showed all the children doing the 'Conga' around the room (behind the 'birthday boy') and that ('if the birthday person wants to') they can dance in the middle of the circle at the end'. Although these rituals had been developed purely by the current cohort of Year One children in response to their own experiences and interests, it was evident that they intended to pass the tradition on to the next cohort so that the ritual became ingrained in the practice of our community. Jessica's comment that the Reception teachers probably would not know about Stevie Wonder and Kool and the Gang, however, implied a pride in the uniqueness of Year One.

5.5.3 Choice

Issues relating to choice were conspicuous in the data. Choice and power are inherently linked. Freedom of choice has associations with empowerment, whilst the withdrawal of choice has connotations with disempowerment. The children's perspectives of their ability or inability to choose in Year One was indicative of their shifting positioning on the balance of power and was, therefore, central to the research. In this sub-section of the data, I draw on Gidden's theory (1979) and Devine's model of structuration (2002); Gibson's theory of affordance (ibid) and Foucault's theories of power (1970-1991) to analyse the children's perceptions of choice and how it was controlled in Year One.

The children's comments relating to things they were expected to do (for example 'lots of writing') ([Appendix Six](#)); resources they felt they no longer had free access to (for example, creative time and outside space) ([Appendix Six](#)) and activities such as Discovery and Challenge Time ([Appendix Six](#)) suggested that they were

experiencing greater control over their time and space and, therefore, less choice (figure 5.6). Comments, such as 'In Discovery and Challenge Time the teachers get to choose what you do' and 'We don't really get to go outside, except at playtime' ([Appendix Six](#)) resonated with regret as well as an acceptance that 'that was how it was' in Year One. Contrary to the more integrated approach to play and learning that they had experienced in Reception, the children's time and space seemed to be classified into 'worktime/space' and 'playtime/space'. Timetables, rules and routines established boundaries on the nature and extent of their activities both in terms of time and space. The children were very aware of the Year One timetables, and the conformity of the visual timetables they created for the novices confirmed the rigor with which these timetables were followed (figure 5.7).

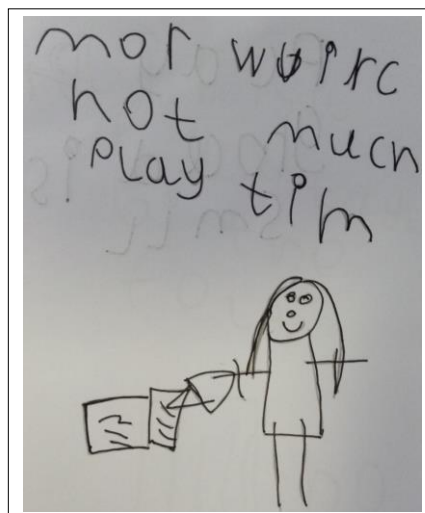


Figure 5.6 *Book made by Emily for the novices*
Translation: More work. Not much play time

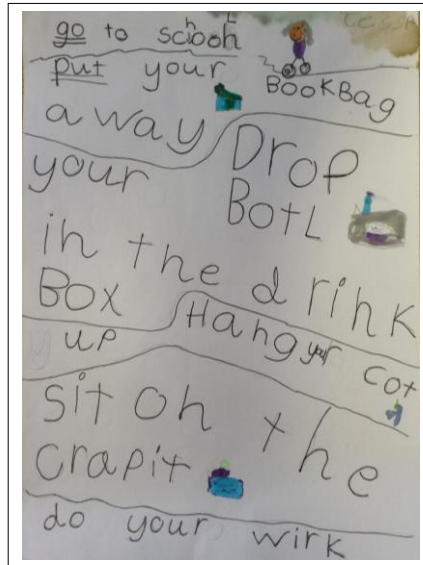


Figure 5.7 Information poster created for the novices by James

Translation: Go to school. Put your book bag away. Drop your water bottle in the drink box.

Hang your coat up. Sit on the carpet. Do your work.

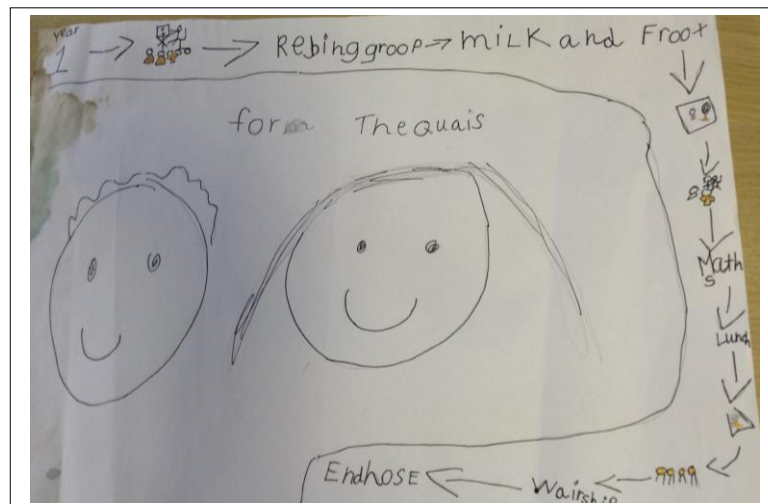


Figure 5.8 'What to do at school map' created by Mary for the novices

Mary's explanation of her map: 'First we have reading groups. Then playtime. Maths, Literacy, lunch.....worship. Then it's home time'



Figure 5.9 Book made by Dylan for the novices Dylan's reading of his writing: 'Not much Discovery'

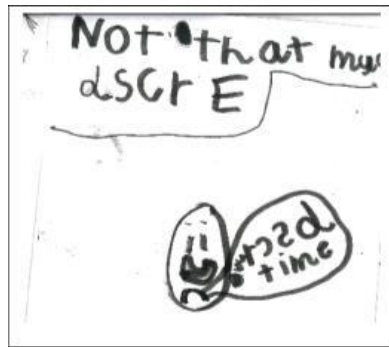


Figure 5.10 Book made by Harry for the novices

Harry's reading of his writing: 'Not much Discovery Time. That's a child with a speech bubble saying Discovery Time' Harry's response: 'They want to do more discovery but the teacher says they have to do other work first'

The importance of the 'timetable' and how it was weighted featured in many of the children's resources. Mary's flow chart of a typical day in Year One (figure 5.8), for example, focused on what are often considered to be key areas of learning, such as phonics, reading, writing and maths. References to the perceived lack of 'Discovery Time' (or choosing time as it was sometimes known) occurred frequently across a broad range of evidence. Sometimes these references were implicit (as in what was included/excluded on a child created timetable) and sometimes it was more explicit

(in, for example, the children's comments, both verbal and written) (figures 5.9 and 5.10).

Billy's drawing (figure 5.11) was particularly indicative of adult control over Discovery Time.



Figure 5.11 A book made by Billy for the novices

Billy's reading of his writing: 'No discovery today'

Some children mentioned 'Challenge Time' in the same context as 'Discovery Time' (figure 5.12) ([Appendix Six](#)). Peter was able to articulate the differential between the two activity concepts, thus:

In Discovery Time the children get to choose anything they want to do. In Challenge Time you still get to choose, but you have to choose from the activities that the teacher has chosen for that day ([Appendix Six](#))

Lara further qualified the statement with her observation that:

The teachers choose what you do in Challenge Time so that you practise what we have been learning. If they didn't you might choose something that isn't real learning and that would be a waste of learning time ([Appendix Six](#))

It appeared that Lara had been absorbing the environmental affordances (Giddens 1979; Gibson and Pick 2000) and official discourse of Year One. She was able to recognise the way in which the adults were manipulating the children's time by

'dressing' the learning as 'Challenge Time'. This led me to consider different perceptions of 'learning' and how these were conveyed through discourse and environmental affordances across Reception and One. Lara's analysis of Year One 'Challenge Time' conveyed a perception of learning as a concept which teachers prescribe. This represented a significant transition from the early years conception of holistic learning (which the children had experienced in Reception). My in-depth knowledge of individual children in my class caused me to reflect on how the quality of Discovery Time 'learning' may be different for different children. I could think of some children, for example, who automatically practiced and applied their learning during 'Discovery Time' (thereby, creating their own rich learning experiences during this period of free choice). I could also think of children who (through the eyes of the classroom practitioners) needed a little more encouragement and guidance to optimise their learning during 'Discovery Time'. Adult agendas for learning and learning experiences, however, often differ from those of children and are not necessarily more valuable or relevant. Adult control over the children's learning exemplified how the wider educational system-controlled learning. Those in power typically dictate what is learnt and how that learning takes place, which inevitably diminishes children and teachers' independence and autonomy in learning.

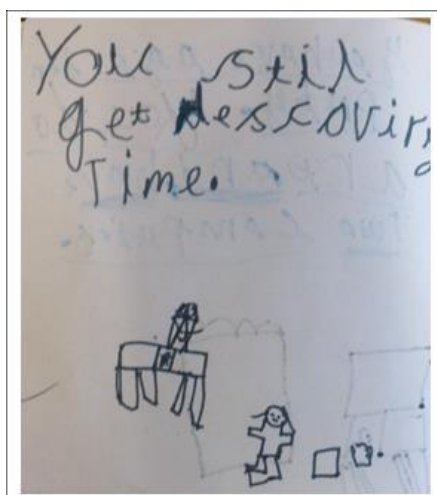


Figure 5.12 *Lara's poster for the novices*

Lara's reading of her writing: 'You still get Discovery Time'

Applying Giddens's theories relating to structures of domination (see p.179) (Giddens 1987) to the immediate context suggested that the teacher's power to influence the time, space and learning patterns of the children was an authoritative resource which facilitated their surveillance and control. This automatically positioned the teachers as more powerful in relation to the children. Hence, the 'regimes of truth' (Foucault 1977) which permeated through our school and the wider education system controlled what myself and the children accepted as 'truth'; led us to participate in 'games of truth' (Peters 2003: 208) and served to maintain existing power relations. It seemed to me that, through the organisation of the 'timetable', the children were forming distinct views on what was valued at school (for example, maths and writing) as well as the priority of work over play in their school day. This was particularly apparent from the resources they made to support the novices.

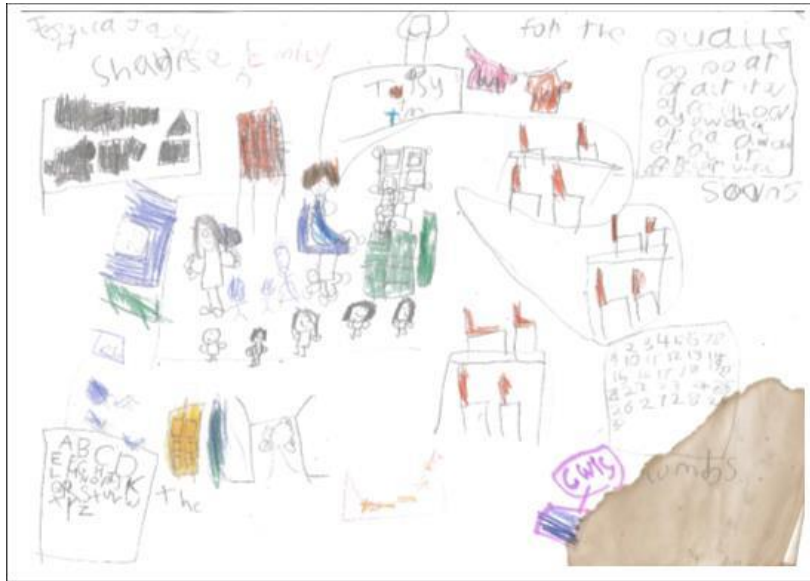


Figure 5.13 Map of Year One classroom by Jessica for the novices

Jessica's explanation of her map: 'Those are the children sitting on the carpet in front of the teacher. Those are the tables and chairs. We have more chairs and tables in Year One. That's where you go to learn shapes, phonic sounds, numbers and alphabet' (pointing to each)

Many of the children's classroom maps focused on the Literacy and Maths resources (for example the phonics wall, large 100 number square and spelling board) (figure 5.13).

Interestingly, however, it was activities (subjects) like art (or being 'creative') that had more appeal to the children, as exemplified by several of the children's comments regarding restrictions that were placed on the creative area.

I miss the creative area. We don't really have one in Year One. Well there is a bit of a creative area, but we only really get to use it for project stuff then the teachers tell you what to make. You don't really choose

The making area is small ([Appendix Six](#))

In contrast with most of the other children's maps, Polly, Jenny and Clare's map (figure 5.14) focused almost exclusively on the creative area and creative resources. This reflected their interests and pre-occupations. When I reviewed the

resource with the girls ([Appendix Ten](#)), I asked them why their map had particularly focused on the creative area. Jenny told me it was because 'Reception usually like making so they would want to know about the making area in Year One'. I asked Clare if she thought the making area was important in Year One. Her somewhat guarded reply was that the making area was:

important (especially when we do projects that have making like *Wacky Races*) but it's not **as** important as it is in Year R because they can make all the time ([Appendix Ten](#))

Polly added:

If we did making all the time we wouldn't get our other important jobs done – like Maths and Literacy challenges, but if the Year Rs know where everything is they can go there quickly when there is time to make. You don't always get time to finish what you are making in Year One ([Appendix Ten](#))

Polly's forward planning of this time management strategy implied that she was using her in depth knowledge of Year One systems and practice to predict and overcome barriers that were important to her. Exemplifying a form of 'construct-subjectivity' (Foucault 1984), Polly was transforming herself in relation to others through the knowledge produced within the power relations and practices of Year One. The dynamics between identity-development and forms of participation were critical to the way in which Polly was internalising and negotiating the existing practices Year One practices (Handley, Sturdy, Fincham and Clark 2006: 644). As Polly gained experience, knowledge and expertise in Year One, she was beginning to recognise where and how she could make personalised changes to established practice, whilst still playing the Year One game'. Her growing awareness and understanding of the Year One community practices (Lave and Wenger 1991); her ability to engage in those practices and her capacity to contribute her own perspectives which impacted and shaped the community (Dunlop 2003) exemplified how 'people continually produce meanings of practices through negotiating with each other and the world, rather than receive them and

hold them in their minds' (Fasoli 2003: 39).

Devine (2002: 312) suggests that control over children's time and space within school defines their experience of education in 'relatively narrow and instrumental terms'. It also serves to 'construct children in particular ways relative to adults' (ibid). Similarly, the organisation of the children's time and space could be more empowering if done in consultation with the children alongside more active participation in decisions concerning their use of time and space. It was also disheartening to think that the children's sense of belonging and connectedness to the Year One learning experiences could be compromised by the pressure to work through formal education material as they progressed through the school.

The pertinent difference between classroom layout in Reception and Year One was mentioned by several children in different discussion groups.

There's more tables and chairs in Year One, cos' we do more work.
There's not really much room on the carpet for building and stuff
([Appendix 18](#))



Figure 5.14 Map by Polly, Jenny and Clare for the novices

Polly's explanation of their map: 'That's the art trolley and those are the tables they can use for making. Those are the modelling boxes' (pointing to each)
([Appendix 10](#))

Tables and chairs were a dominating feature on most of the classroom maps (figures 5.15, 5.16 and 5.17).



Figure 5.15 Dylan's map of the Year One classroom for the novices



Figure 5.16 Oliver's map of Year One classroom for the novices

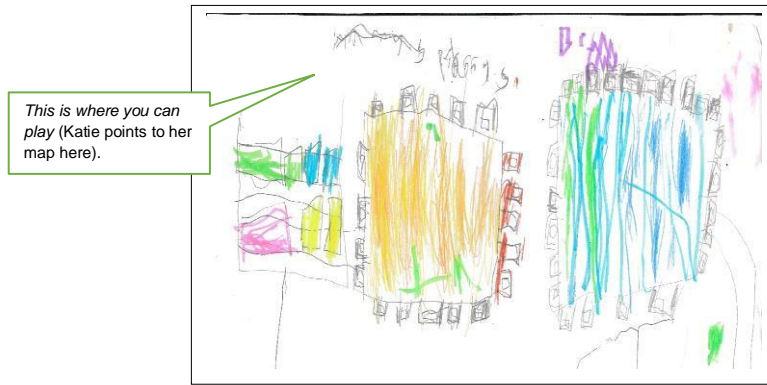


Figure 5.17 *Katy's map of the classroom for the novices*

On Katie's map (figure 5.17) it was interesting to note the size and scale of the 'play area' in relation to the size of the tables. Her visual representation of classroom structure mirrored Ben's representation of the work/play balance in Year One ([figure 5.1](#)).

I found the prominence of the 'teacher's chair' in multiple children's pictorial representations (figure 5.18) especially disconcerting, causing me to question if the children perceived this piece of furniture to be a status symbol that was indicative of the teacher's position and power.

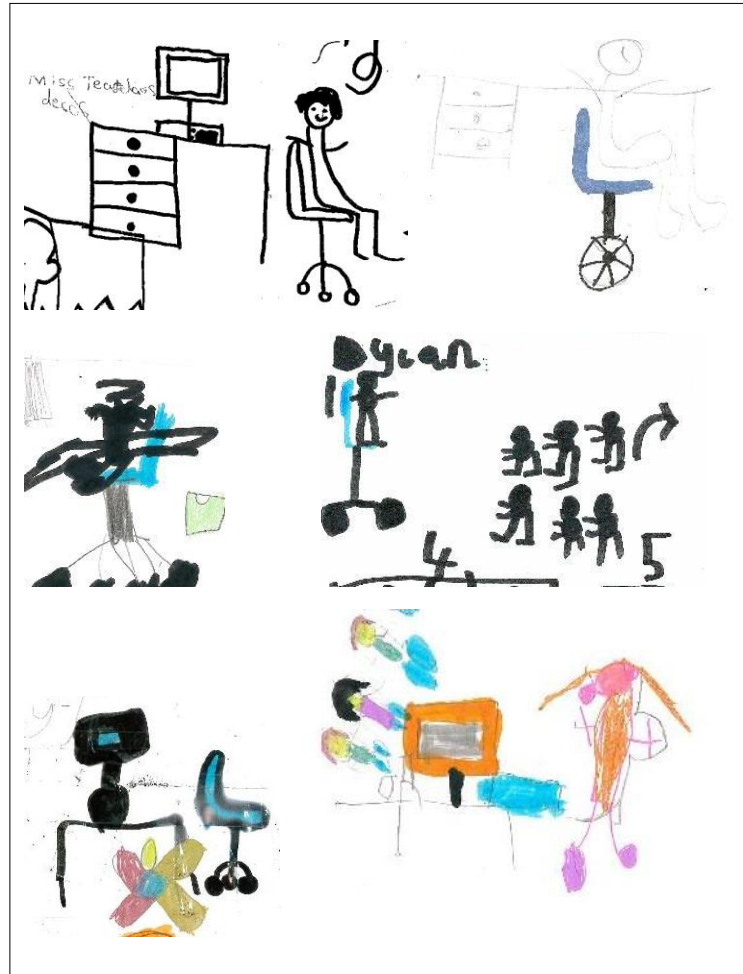


Figure 5.18 Excerpts from a range of children's drawings, books and maps – created for the novices

Foucault (1979) refers to the communication of differences in status and position through the allocation of space in institutions as the 'architectural composition of space'. One child's observations regarding differences in access to resources seemed to be symbolic of power relations between adults and children.

In Year R you can look in all the drawers. In Year One the teachers open the drawers ([Appendix Six](#))

I was reminded of Foucault's (1979) references to an 'analytical pedagogy'

which can be created by limiting and controlling children's movement to maximise discipline and learning (Devine 2002).

A number of children mentioned access to the outside and how this was mainly limited to designated whole class playtimes or for specific, prescribed learning opportunities (figure 5.19) ([Appendix Four](#)). The spontaneous physical activity which they had experienced within the Reception free flow in and out facility, for example, was replaced in Year One with timetabled PE with a sports coach at times designated by the teacher. In the eyes of the children, it was the teachers that made most of the decisions and it was the teachers who had control. My own observations of the outside space (that was traditionally utilised by Year One) was that, compared to the busy, vibrant Reception area in which children were encouraged to pursue their own ideas and interests, it was also quite barren and prescribed – set up at that time to facilitate specific interventions which children were 'let out' to participate in at adult specified times. This too seemed to represent a renegotiation of power between teachers and children. One discussion group had developed their own rationale for the discrepancy in outdoor space between the two key stages.

The Year Rs need practice on the bikes – we don't – so they get the bigger area and more time to play outside

We don't go outside as much because we have lots to do

We only have a small outside space but we do have the big playground

([Appendix Four](#))

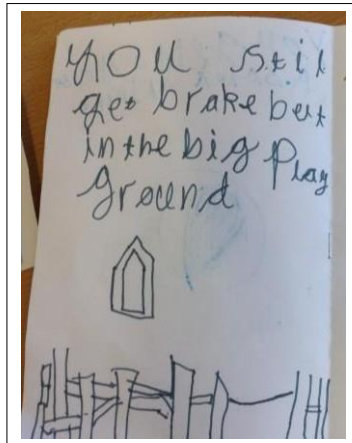


Figure 5.19 *Emily's Information book for the novices*

Devine (2002) argues that it is the manner in which control over the children's time, space and interaction is exercised that enables children to form particular perspectives related to their positioning as individuals with particular rights and status in school. Giddens (1991) suggests that structures become 'instantiated' in practice as individuals interact with one another in a range of institutional settings and that each institution is characterised by its own structures of signification, legitimation and domination. In practice, the instantiation of these practices position individuals in relation to one another and, therefore, shape their relations, experiences and identity (ibid). In the process of reacting, resisting or (as was very often the case) accommodating the practice of those who held a position of domination (in my case my senior management, local authority, the government and Ofsted and, in the children's case, me) we were constructing particular identities about ourselves related to our rights and status in school. We were also engaging in the process of (as Giddens (1976) would call it) 'reflexive monitoring', whereby we were continually evaluating and monitoring our behaviour (both practically and discursively), in light of the expectations and evaluations of others (Devine 2002: 307). The knock-on effect of power relationships in our school and the school system exemplified the way in which

structures are produced, reproduced or transformed through knowledgeable human action, giving rise to both intended and unintended outcomes (ibid).

The interrelationship between structure and agency within which structures are both the outcome and the medium of human action is referred to by Devine (2002: 307) as the 'duality of structure'. It appeared that the dynamics of structure and control in Year One could be both empowering and disempowering for the children. I was interested to find out the children's perspectives of learning in Year One and whether they perceived the change in curriculum to be empowering or disempowering.

5.6 'Things you learn to do in Year One' (Progression in learning): Power and Knowledge

Project based learning runs throughout Key Stage One in our school. It is a part of the curriculum that is firmly based on the principles of providing a purpose for learning. The children are introduced to a project by way of a 'hook'. The hook usually takes the form of a problem which the children will help to solve. This provides a 'real' context for their learning and a purpose to learn. For example, an article that appeared in the local newspaper saying 'Keep on driving – there's nothing to see or do in this area' caused an uproar amongst the Year One children and inspired them to prove the author wrong by finding out more about our local area. The geography-based project culminated in a hugely successful local area exhibition (the project 'outcome') at which the children showcased everything they had found out about their surroundings. The 'we are learning to....., so that.....' approach encourages children to develop their knowledge in order to progress to a position of expertise. On graduating as an 'expert' they are able to solve the initial problem and disseminate the knowledge they have acquired to others by way of the project 'outcome'.

Projects (like the Queen’s Portrait) were mentioned frequently by the experts during our discussions, indicating that project-based learning was important to the children. Billy explained:

The Year One projects are real projects like cars and being healthy. When you are older you get to learn things that will help with important things – like helping Mrs. C get fit and designing cars for the next Wacky Race ([Appendix Five](#))

Chloe added that:

In Year One we learn to be real portrait artists.... and authors.... and scientists....as you get older you learn more interesting things than you did in Reception ([Appendix Four](#))

The children’s comments relating to projects implied that our approach to project-based learning encouraged the children to think of themselves as experts and developed feelings of empowerment, thus celebrating the relationship between power and knowledge.

In contrast to the empowering effects of the projects, several of the children mentioned ‘alien’ words in the context of ‘things you learn in Year One’ (figure 5.20). Katie’s comment that

Alien words are just silly words that don’t mean anything. You don’t have to understand them you just have to read them. I don’t know why, you just have to ([Appendix 12](#))

implied that she understood the reading of alien words to be just another of those adult imposed practices that were ingrained in our community (Edwards 2000) and carried out unquestioningly by children on a daily basis (Robinson 2015). It was unlikely that the Phonics Screening Check had done anything to enhance children’s voice (Kellett 2005) (see p.295).

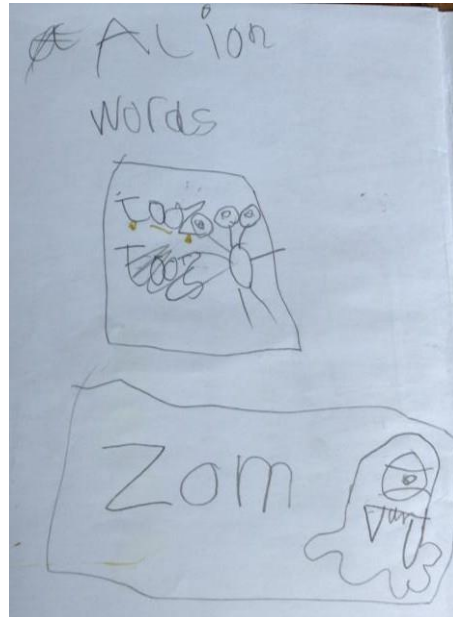


Figure 5.20 Katie's poster for the novices Katie's reading of her writing: 'Alien Words. Zom'

The importance of relationships between year groups featured in discussions about 'What you learn in Year One'. Top Tips for the novices included phrases such as 'You have to learn more when you get older' and 'You have to get ready for Year Two'. 'They do lots and lots of sitting and learning in the Year Two' ([Appendix 18](#)). These implied that, just like the adults, the children were susceptible to the discourse and influences of school 'readiness' ([p.51](#)). Comments like suggested that the experts were (like Bernstein 1975, 1990, 1996) beginning to link *official* knowledge, power and status in the community (Brooker 2002). Observations such as 'You have to be 5 or 6 to be in Year One. You can't be younger' implied that the experts considered the hierarchical make up of power relations in school to be based on age, whilst Sophie's explicit drawing (figure 5.21) and James's comment that

In Year R it's fun work. In Year One its middle fun work. But in Year Two there's no fun at all ([Appendix Five](#))

suggested the novices were also beginning to associate their position of power with increased responsibilities, expectations and greater work commitments as well as growing older.

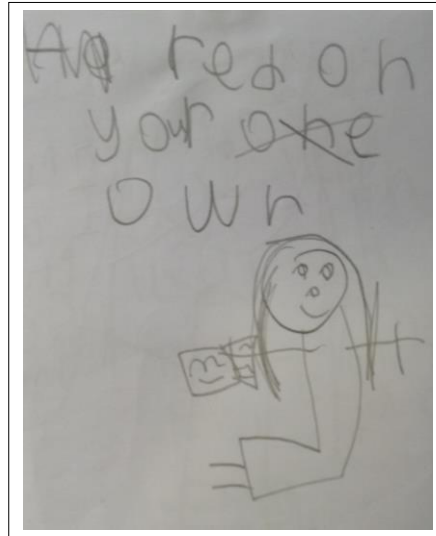


Figure 5.21 Sophie's Information Book for the novices

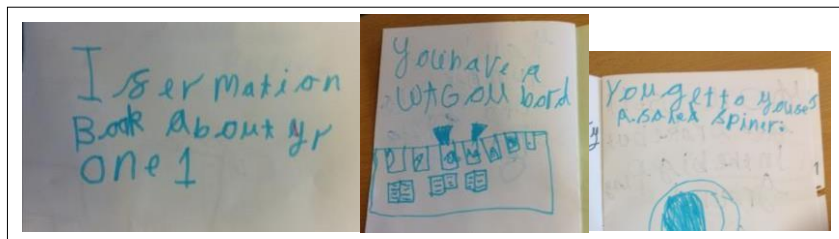


Figure 5.22 Emily's information book about Year One for the novices

Emily's reading of her writing: 'Information book about Year One. You have a WAGOLL board. You get to use a salad spinner'

Alongside a greater workload and the responsibilities of Year One, the children's comments and resources drew attention to the privileges of Year One and being older. These included honours like using a salad spinner for art; having your work displayed on the WAGOLL (what a good one looks like) board and owning a 'real'

sketch book (figure 5.21). For Polly, the sacrifices of Year One also had positives

We can tidy up quicker in Year One because we don't do so much making so there's less mess ([Appendix 5](#))

5.7 Chapter Five Summary

The findings presented in this chapter illustrate aspects of transition and Year One that mattered most to the children. The children reflected on the process of transition and identified characteristics of transition that demonstrated their awareness of power/knowledge relationships, for example their reliance on others to show and tell them what to do. The findings revealed how the children made sense of, and negotiated their way through, a range of discourse and practice in Year One that limited their sense of identity and agency, including restricted choice; control of their time and space; rules and routines that were not always fully understood and a prioritisation of reading, writing and maths over other learning. From the children's perspectives, however, learning in Year One could be both empowering and disempowering. When they could see a clear purpose for their learning they found their own acquisition of knowledge empowering (as in their project based learning) and it was this knowledge that they could confidently pass on to others.

In Chapter Six I explore how the children used their findings, experiences and expertise to support the next group of children in their transition to Year One.

Chapter 6. Findings and Analysis. How the children used their findings and experiences of transition to support new groups of children moving into Key Stage One

The findings thus far reveal the children's in-depth knowledge and understanding of Year One practices and discourse. They also illustrate the complexities of power/knowledge relationships in Year One during a time of transition. In order to achieve the main aim of my research, however, I needed to explore how the children used their knowledge and experience to support new groups of children as they moved into Year One. In this chapter I bring into play Lave and Wenger's theory of 'Communities of Practice', with particular reference to 'Apprenticeship' and 'Brokerage'. I also draw on Foucault's concept of power as a multi-directional function to analyse the relationship between knowledge, expertise and empowerment. Included in this section is the data that was thematically analysed into the theme of:

'Top tips and things to help them' (Apprenticeship, expertise and brokerage): Knowledge and Empowerment'

Once again I discuss the findings of the research alongside the analysis of those findings.

6.1 'Top tips and things to help them' (Apprenticeship, expertise and brokerage): Knowledge and Empowerment

Reflecting back on the way in which James (see p.192) had been supported through transition by his interaction with older children and other communities, I was interested to find out what further supporting factors had helped the experts to bridge the gap between Reception and Year One. As anticipated the experts were able to provide me with a list of supporting factors which had helped them to negotiate the move. These included visits to Year One, Year One adults visiting

them in Reception, 'moving up' with their friends and 'Mrs. Collins'. Mrs. Collins was a teaching assistant who (over the course of the school week) supported children from across the school and worked in all of the year groups. This meant that when the novices moved into Year One they already knew one of the adults and that adult already knew them. Forming attachments with adults in the community is a key factor in transition and integration into a community of practice. Mrs. Collins was, therefore, an agent of brokerage who helped to bridge the gap between communities. Emily told me that her brother had also helped 'because he knew all about Year One'.

Emily's older brother had moved on to junior school when Emily moved into Year One, but his past experience meant that Year One discourse extended into Emily's home community. Similar to James's experiences this had worked as a positive for Emily. Prior to her transit into Year One Emily already knew about some of the exciting projects. She knew there was 'extra playtime' and she knew that in Year One you 'got to be an artist'. Jessica, however, told me that her cousin was in Year One in another school and that 'he said there was lots of hard work in Year One'. I concluded that discourse could produce both positive and negative feelings at times of transition.

Key events in the school calendar were also mentioned by the children. Events such as '[Move up Day](#)'; Year One staff visits to Reception and the [Moving On Puppet Show](#) were planned in as part of the school's transition programme. Throughout the year, however, the children encountered other events that also helped to smooth the transition process and, hence, also acted as a form of brokerage. James, for example, said that he had thought Year One would be 'good because he had been to the Queen's tea party' (an event hosted by the Year One children as part of one of their projects) ([Appendix Five](#)). Ben knew that Mrs. Howe was friendly because he had 'seen her on the cake stall at the Spring Fair'.

James and Ben's experiences exemplified Bronfenbrenner's (1998) ecological perspective of the influence and connection between different areas of a child's life and the importance of interactions between microsystems. Events such as the school summer fayre, the annual nativity play and sports day are significant within our village, church and school communities [\(p.20\)](#). They provide sites where multiple communities (as well as local and official knowledge) merge. During such events, children have the opportunity to shift between communities of practice (Wenger 1998) and develop their sense of identity within those communities (Wenger 1998). Identities and practice develop through participation (Handley et al. 2006). The fact that the summer fayre falls shortly before our transition programme begins is purely coincidental. The event, however, has traditionally been an opportunity for teachers and teaching assistants to interact with new cohorts. The fair, and events like it, therefore, contribute to the process of brokerage and are often affective transitional tools.

I asked one group of children why they thought that certain people or events made transition easier ([Appendix Four](#)). After some careful contemplation, Emily offered the reasoning

They're people who already know what it's like. They can tell you and show you what to do and when you do move up day or go to the Queen's birthday party you get to see what to do in Year One ([Appendix Four](#))

Emily's insightful rationale reminded me of two of Bronfenbrenner's hypotheses:

the extent to which (relevant) valid information, advice and experience are made available enhances development (Bronfenbrenner 1979: 211)

and

developmental potential is enhanced if initial transition into a setting is not made alone (ibid)

Being told or shown what to do in Year One was important to the children. The

more informed they felt about the next stage of learning, the more empowered they felt to cope with transition. This once again reinforced the relationship between power and knowledge. What made successful brokerage for these children, it seemed, was the transfer of knowledge. James's observation

Now we know what happens in Year One we can tell and show the new children ([Appendix Five](#))

was quickly taken on board by the other children who suggested various ways of 'showing and telling' the new children about Year One, including 'showing them around' and 'putting on a puppet show to tell them what it will be like'.

The experts' first-hand experience of transition told them that, in order to succeed in Year One, the novices needed to be aware of Key Stage One practices. They approached the problem of transition pragmatically using their experience and knowledge to offer advice to the novices. The advice they offered was the product of experience and knowledge of the school microsystem, as well as experience and local knowledge of what it was like to be a novice. The children recognised their own expertise and how they could apply it to helping others. Their *Top Tips* for the novices included advice, such as:

The challenges are usually something the teachers have already taught you. You can use what you know to help you

If you like going outside you can join the gardening club. Then you can get to go out more

Don't worry. You will get to do making in projects

We learn about alien words. They're more tricky than red or green words because they're not real words' 'But you can sound them out if you have learnt your sounds

([Appendix Eleven](#))

According to Dockett and Perry (2005), sharing information about the practices of schools and the expectations of school communities is one way of assisting others

to engage in these practices and, hence, to become members of communities of practice. Recent, firsthand, experience of transition meant that the experts understood and could relate to what the novices were experiencing. As established members, they were in a position to play key roles in helping the novices 'to learn the practices that count in the community' (Fasoli 2003: 39).

This was exemplified in the conversation between Billy (an expert) and Harry (a novice) (figure 6.1) ([Appendix Eighteen](#)).

(Context:	The two boys are looking at the Walk to School programme on the computer
Billy:	<i>'That's where you record how you came to school'</i>
Harry:	<i>'Oh'</i>
Billy:	<i>'If you walked to school you click on the picture of the children walking '</i>
Harry:	<i>'I walk to school'</i>
Billy:	<i>'Then you have to click on the picture like this, otherwise the office won't know</i>

Figure 6.1 *Conversation between Billy and Harry* ([Appendix Eighteen](#))

Billy was providing Harry with information that would help him to understand the registration routine on a level he could relate to. This exemplified the 'form of mediation between novices in one community, and knowledgeable practitioners in another' described by (Middleton et al. 2002: 428). It epitomised Wenger's (1998) concept of *brokerage*. By explaining, clarifying and using exemplifications to aid Harry's understanding, Billy was beginning to show his competence as a communicator. *Official* knowledge (Bernstein 1971) and competence put him in a position of power over Harry.

References to what the novices might think, feel or do when they started in Year One (figure 6.2) and the experts' ability to find solutions for potential problems (figure 6.3) was an indication of the growing maturity of my young researchers within the community.

'They might worry about using bigger numbers in Maths'
'They could be worried that the Year One work will be too tricky'
'Some children worry about changing for PE'

Figure 6.2 *Children's references to what the novices might think, feel or do*

'We could show them the big number square so they know where to look for help'
'They need to know that the teachers are nice and they will help them with things they find tricky'
'Ask your friends to help you if you can't do up your zip yet'

Figure 6.3 *The experts' solutions*

Many of the children's *Top Tips* focused upon the academic aspect of Year One practice. This implied that the increased expectations in reading, writing and maths were a characteristic of the Year One transition that particularly concerned the children. Their 'Top Tips' relating to these high-profile elements of the curriculum reflected interpretations of Year One discourse that had developed over time and from an early age. They included statements like 'learn your sounds', 'know your numbers' and 'remember to use full stops and finger spaces' (Figure 5.2). The specific discourses which shaped the children's understanding that these were the skills that mattered in Year One were constructed, maintained and supported by the school institution and its practices. Children were increasingly exposed to these discourses from the moment they began school (or even before). It was, for example, common practice for the youngest children in the school to be sent to my classroom to show me examples of their writing. This

practice formed part of the school's 'unofficial' transition process and became increasingly more practiced during the summer term when children and teachers began to focus on the coming transitions (see p.294). Reception teachers considered the practice to be an effective way of building bridges between the two communities. Notably, however, it was only the children's achievements in reading, writing and maths that were celebrated in this manner and I was unable to think of one child who had been encouraged to present to me their artwork, 'making' or any other 'non-academic' accomplishments.

Such discourses also had implications for the children's 'sense of connectedness to their learning experiences as well as their sense of themselves as individuals with a particular status and position within the school' (Devine 2002: 309). This, in turn, began to shape the children's perceptions of what kind of learning/subjects were more valued in adult life and those which were less valued (for example art). Emily's drawing of a child showing her number work whilst commenting 'look what I have done teacher' (figure 6.4) was particularly thought provoking in this respect. In disseminating their knowledge to the novices, however, some of the experts at least were beginning to challenge the existing discourse of Year One, thereby, contributing to its development. Joshua and Polly, for example, were foregrounding art and creativity as an important element of Year One, whilst Ben was challenging discourse that portrayed stricter adults and harder work (see pages 324, 218 and 219).



Figure 6.4 Book made by Emily for the novices

Emily's reading of her writing: 'Do maths good. The girl's saying: Look what I done teacher'

Legitimate access to the ongoing community of practice had immersed the experts in a social process of increasingly centripetal participation (Lave 1991). They had developed a bank of *official* knowledge (Bernstein 1971) and learnt to belong to the community by engaging in its practices (Fasoli 2003). Consequently, within this model of apprenticeship (Wenger 1998), they had moved from a position of legitimate peripheral participation to full participation. Hence, the 'newcomers' had gradually become 'oldtimers' (Lave 1991). They had also *become* the community of practice for the novices. As full participating experts in Year One and participants in the research, they were now in a position to influence and reshape the transition process for the next cohort of children.

The experts' progress to a more powerful position served to renegotiate relationships within the community. My interactions with the experts indicated that they were starting to think of themselves as 'big children' (for example 'In Year One we have computers because we're bigger' and 'We are older so we listen to grown up stories without pictures'). They frequently referred to the

novices as 'the new children' or 'the little ones'. This suggested to me that the experts were aware of the hierarchical nature of the school and unspoken 'rites of passage' which existed within the school community of practice (Van Gennepe 1960; Campbell Clark 2000). I would also argue that, taking responsibility for the research, had developed the children's perceptions as themselves as experts (see Joshua p.264 and William p.256).

Encouraging the children to use their knowledge of Year One to support the novices elevated them to the role of expert and was immediately empowering. Children often counterbalance adult-power relations in school by their interactions with one another (Devine, 2002). Several studies have highlighted a 'child culture' as central in helping children cope with the evaluative context of school, as well as enabling them to regain some autonomy in the face of adult control (McNamee 2000; Pollard 1997). Giddens (1984) suggests that children's feelings of powerlessness and domination manifest in their relations with their peers which in turn become a coping strategy. The 'mentoring' programme was a positive way of channeling the children's innate urge to counter-balance power relations through peer interactions. Rather than viewing the power relationships I was observing as purely oppressive, I chose (at this point) to explore the multiple, rather than one way, functions of power (Jackson and Mazzei 2012: 49) and to focus on 'the productive effects of power' as it circulated amongst the 'practices of people' in our school. Hence, the latter stages of my research promoted the children's growing expertise in Year One and developed their role as 'Brokers' (Wenger 1998) in the transition process for the next cohort of children.

6.1.1 Expertise

The resources that the experts produced in order to support the novices were varied and creative. They illustrated the children's growing expertise in research as well as their in-depth knowledge of Year One practices. An authentic

commitment to children's voice recognises, values and enables diversity (Lundy, McEnvoy and Bryne 2011). The resources reflected a range of experiences and skills. They demonstrated interesting and sophisticated perspectives. The research findings thus far exemplify how the prioritisation of what school discourse perceived to be 'academic' subjects in Year One silenced and negated children's other expertise. Experts, however, hold different interests, skills and perceptions. One of the benefits of a research approach that is strongly committed to children's voice is the wide range of individual responses it can generate.

Joshua, for example, is a 'summer born boy' (Sharp et al. 2006) (see glossary). His achievements in Maths, Reading and Writing are assessed against the Year One Learning Outcomes (DfE 2014c) to be 'Below Expectations'. For this reason, he is not expected to meet the end of year expectations for Year One. Joshua participates in a number of regular small group and 1:1 interventions. Comments like 'I'm not too great at writing yet but I'm really good at art' show that he is aware of his academic positioning in relation to his peers.

It was during our 'Queen's Portrait' project, however, that Joshua discovered his area of expertise. Alongside his peers, Joshua learnt how to draw faces by watching a *YouTube* video of an artist at work. The video shows children how to draw a face in proportion by following a series of simple steps. Joshua was naturally very proud of his achievements in Art (figure 6.5) and it was this expertise that he decided to pass on to the novices. During the initial small group discussions (which focused on what the experts thought the novices might need to know), Joshua was resolute that they needed to know 'how to draw faces'. When it came to deciding what resources could be produced, Joshua suggested that he could 'make a film to show them how to draw faces' (figure 6.6). Due to the intricate nature of filming such a process, Joshua was supported by an adult who filmed his demonstration. Joshua's detailed knowledge of how to draw a face enabled him to model the whole process in sequence. He also provided his own

commentary to accompany his visual presentation.

Joshua's knowledge of art and art techniques was empowering. His skills elevated him to a position of expert in the community. Joshua had chosen to focus his contribution to the project on an area of transition that he felt comfortable with and which was also important to him. His knowledge and expertise in Art gave him confidence and tools to succeed as a mentor. Had the research not been so firmly embedded in children's voice and had it not been so responsive to the children's interests, strengths and perceptions the outcome (for Joshua and children like him) may have been very different. If I had predetermined the research methods (for example, by prescribing what resources the children would make and how they would present them) rather than enabling the children to make these decisions, Joshua's valuable resource may not have been produced and it is unlikely that Joshua would have felt so empowered. As it was, the success of Joshua's video tutorials inspired some of the other experts to make support videos relating to their areas of expertise (see p.241).



Figure 6.5 *Joshua's art*

Extract from Joshua's sketch book which he showed to the novices during their orientation visit to the Year One classroom.



Figure 6.6 *Screen shots from Joshua's How to Draw a Face video created and presented by Joshua to support the novice in art*

Billy, Ben and James used their ICT skills to create a series of short videos to support the novices. The children took it in turns to video a range of routines and provided commentary to support the visual images. James, for example, recorded Billy completing (and talking about) the Year One early morning routine (figure 6.7).

Billy: (Walking from the front door to the book bag box and dropping his book bag in)
'First you have to put away your book bag in the box that's got your name on it'
(Putting his coat on his peg) 'Then you hang up your coat. Make sure it is on your peg and not on the floor'
(Pointing to the lunch picture book) 'You look at the pictures and choose what lunch you want'
'If you want the vegetarian lunch you put a green ticket by your name' (Holding up a green ticket) 'If you want meat you put a red ticket' (Pointing).

Figure 6.7 *Transcript of video made by Billy, Ben and James*

Other videos created by the boys included *How to do the Walk to School on the Computer* and *How to take out a new 'Read to Me' book*. Each video included instructions involving multiple steps and detailed commentary. The boys played back each video after it was taken and discussed its quality. They re-recorded videos they were not happy with.

Also focusing on their preferred mode of communication and in line with their interest in creative styles of presentation, Polly and Clare chose to create a puppet show to support the novices (Figure 6.8) ([Appendix Eighteen](#)). The synopsis of their puppet show was the interplay between a younger (Reception) child and an older (Year One) child. The latter posed questions of their mentor, who responded with helpful answers and advice. For example, Figure 6.9:



Figure 6.8 Polly and Clare's puppet show

Puppet Show Synopsis:

Emerald (Younger Puppet): 'Do you do reading and writing in Year One?'

Elsa (Old Puppet): 'We do lots of reading and writing but don't worry. I worried at first but now I'm good at it'

Emerald: 'Can I learn to be an artist?'

Elsa: 'Yes. The teachers show you how to do good art and you do lots of practising so you learn how to be an artist. It doesn't matter if you aren't good at art to start with'

Figure 6.9 Polly and Clare's puppet show synopsis ([Appendix Eighteen](#))

This style of presentation illustrated the group's knowledge and understanding of the expert/novice relationship as well as their innovative communication skills.

One of the most creative resources made was Emily's 'Play Ground Box' (or the 'Playtime Survival Kit' as it became known) (figure 6.10) ([Appendix Eighteen](#)). This consisted of a shoe box (decorated with stickers) and containing items Emily thought would help a new arrival in Year One. These included: a skipping rope, a plaster, some tissues, a few small colouring pencils and several colouring sheets, a pad of mini stickers and a hand-made paper teddy bear. Emily was clearly very proud of her box. She explained:

Inside there's things to help a Reception child in the big playground. The skipping rope and colouring is so they're not bored in the playground. There's a plaster if they fall over, a tissue in case they cry. The stickers are so more people will be friends with them. They can cuddle the teddy if they are sad or miss their mummy. If they don't know how to skip I can teach them ([Appendix Eighteen](#))



Figure 6.10 *Emily's Playground Box*

Further probing suggested the Emily perceived the Key Stage One playground to be a concept that can be quite daunting, especially for children who are experiencing it for the first time.

It's a bit scary when you first play in the big playground. There's lots of big children and your teacher isn't always there. Sometimes you can't find anyone to play with and sometimes you don't know the games. If you fall over someone will help you or they can look in the box for help ([Appendix Eighteen](#))

Many of the experts' resources demonstrated their ability to reflect on their own memories and feelings during transition and to relate this to what the novices may be feeling. Hope, for example, produced a stuffed toy based on 'Peegu' (a fictional character that appeared in a class story book) (figure 6.11). She explained:

I made a Peegu to help the new children. If they are feeling worried or scared, they can hug him like a teddy. It will make them feel better ([Appendix Eighteen](#))

Hope's ability to place herself in the novices' 'shoes' exemplified a mature sense of empathy. It also inferred the depth and longevity of feelings associated with transition for the experts. Hope translated her feelings about transition into a practical resource that would support and provide comfort to the novices. This implied that her experience of transition may have been uncomfortable.

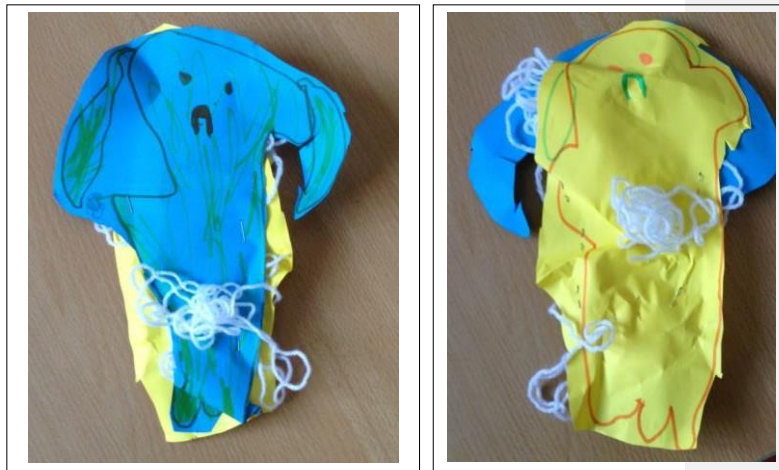


Figure 6.11 Hope's cuddly toy (*Peequ*) made for the novices

Elliot (a keen photographer) choose to create a collection of photographs to support the novices. His album included photos of resources and systems (such as, the wooden bricks and the lunch register) as well as concepts (for example, his photograph of the 'Learning Pit') (figure 6.13)

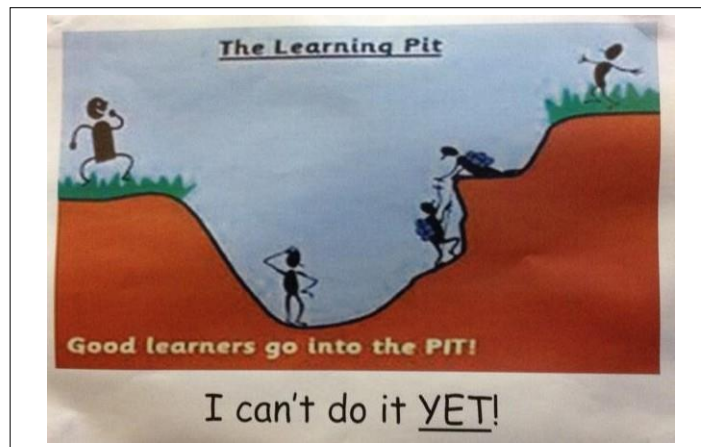


Figure 6.13 Elliot's photographs to support the novices

During our discussions about the resources, Elliot explained that:

The new children need to know that learning new things is tricky. You start off in the pit, but if you keep on trying you will get it in the end.....Moving into Year One is tricky. You have to learn new things and some of its hard, but you mustn't give up ([Appendix Eighteen](#))

Elliot's ability to equate the transition into Year One with the 'Learning Pit' (a concept the children had been exploring in other contexts related to their learning) provided a model of the novice to expert journey of transition that was not dissimilar to the journey from a position of legitimate peripheral participation to full participation (Lave and Wenger 1991). Elliot's photograph, however, provided a very visual image with which to engage the novices and clearly exemplify his thoughts. This showed a mature awareness of the needs of his audience, as well as an ability to apply aspects of his own apprenticeship in learning to that of the novices and his role as a mentor or broker.

In a quite different way, Jake also used his experiences to inform his making of a resource to support the novices. Recognising the big playground as a feature of Key Stage One that sometimes presented a problem to a novice, Jake chose to make a poster of things to do at playtime. Jake's poster is another piece of

evidence that I have protected because it contains photographs of children. It is, however, a valuable piece of evidence. Entitled 'What you can do at playtime', the poster included photographs of things to play with, a sequence of photos in which Jake demonstrated how to play 'Sharky, Sharky' (a popular playground game) and some *Top Tips* to help the novices. Although Jake did not explicitly refer to his own experiences in the playground as a novice, I recalled that Jake had found play time on the big playground particularly challenging during his first few weeks in Year One. Jake's ability to apply his learning during transition to the novices, however, reinforced my belief that the best brokers in the Reception to One transition were the children who had recent first-hand experience of the same process.

6.1.2 Orientation Visits

The orientation visits provided an opportunity for the experts to demonstrate their expertise and disseminate their knowledge to the novices. All of the experts were keen and willing to participate in this event. Even Hope (who was usually quite shy with people she did not know) rose to the occasion, stepping into her 'expert shoes' with an unexpected confidence. I conjectured that Hope's confidence in her role as an expert guide was a result of the confidence she felt in her own knowledge and understanding of Year One practice. Hence, I attributed Hope's uncharacteristic confidence to the opportunities she had had to reflect upon and discuss the Year One transition process during the course of our research, as well as her secure knowledge of the subject she was presenting to the novices. I inferred that the practice of making the transition visible to the children was an aspect of the research study that had benefited all of the experts and contributed to their metacognitive knowledge and understanding of the transition process. It had also developed their aptitude to act as competent and

reliable brokers for the new cohort.

Many of the children used the resource they had made to support their tours. Jessica, for example, used her map as a point of reference before the tour, pointing to some of the places of interest and even asking Maisie (a novice) to point out what she would like to see. Emily proudly shared her playground box with a group of children. Hope took along 'Peegu' when she met up with Jenny. Intuitively she asked Jenny if she would like to hold her toy whilst she showed her round and even said she could keep Peegu when the tour was complete 'just in case (she needed) him to hug or be a friend on move up day'. It was also particularly rewarding to hear a small group of novices asking the puppet show experts if they could 'play with the puppet show again' and even more so to observe the experts showing the novices how to make puppets in the making area during their visit ([Appendix Seventeen](#)). I decided that the experts' resources had become brokerage tools to support transition and child-led activities (such as the puppet making) had played an invaluable role in bridging the gap between the two-year groups. What made these resources and activities successful, however, was the interaction between peers and the experts' knowledge of what was required to put the novices at ease. It was unlikely, that adult led activities or resources would have been so effective.

Another interesting aspect of the orientation visits was the expert/novice partnerships that were formed. As far as possible the experts were encouraged to choose which novices they showed around Year One. This resulted in some unexpected, as well as predictable, partnerships. Some children, like Emily, chose partners who were familiar to them (for example, younger siblings, family friends or children they knew from pre-school). Others, like Ben, were happy to partner any novice who gravitated towards them. Joshua, on the other hand, took steps to ensure that his partner shared his common interest in art by asking one of the

Reception adults

Do any of the children like art? Because I can tell them how and tell them all about the art we do in Year One ([Appendix Seventeen](#))

The opportunity to choose what, how and to whom he presented Year One practice enabled Joshua to tailor his own role in the orientation visits to his strengths and, thus, empowered him as a broker as well as an artist. His self-introduction to Ryan (a novice) affirmed his self- assurance

So you like art. Well, I'm an expert artist so I can show you what we do in art ([Appendix Seventeen](#))

Joshua proudly showed Ryan his sketch book and (with some initial support) used an *ipad* to demonstrate the techniques, pausing the video at relevant points to explain the processes in more detail ([Appendix Seventeen](#)). This illustrated his expertise, not only as an artist, but also as a communicator and presenter. I inferred that Joshua's confidence in himself as a presenter may well have diminished had he been required to present other areas of Year One practice (for example, English or Maths) about which he felt less knowledgeable. Again, this reiterated the relationship between knowledge and power (Foucault 1979).

The orientation 'tours' took various formats, depending on the partnerships formed and which of the experts were conducting them. Using the videos and classroom maps (on which we had tracked the journeys of some of the children during the visits) I was able to analyse the children's approach to the tours and how they chose to traverse the classroom ([Appendix Seventeen](#)). Somewhat predictably many of the tours reflected the experts' interests and areas of expertise. Polly, for example, headed straight for the 'making area' where she proceeded to show her novice partner the array of resources on offer ([Appendix Seventeen](#)). Joshua, drew attention to the 'Fine Art' gallery (which contained

several of his masterpieces); spent time showing his partner where the art books and drawing materials were kept; then set about teaching his partner how to draw a portrait ([Appendix Seventeen](#)). Ben focused his attentions on the resources that supported maths and literacy, for example, the phonetic sound cards, reading books, number bonds and the WAGOLL board. He also showed off his writing and maths books and explained:

The pink pen shows when you have done something well. The green pen are things you need to remember or get better at. Sometimes the teacher puts the pink and green pen. Sometimes we do it. It's not bad if you get green. It just shows you how to do an even better job next time ([Appendix Seventeen](#))

Then, apparently realising that he may have disturbed the novices by focusing exclusively on what might be classed as the 'academic' aspects of Year One (within the current discourse), he assured them

If you can't write or do maths now you don't have to worry 'cos that's what you learn in Year One. I can show you the building blocks if you like ([Appendix Seventeen](#))

Ben's perceptive approach to the mentoring process showed an empathetic understanding of how it felt to be a novice. I thought back to the recollections he had voiced during our initial discussions

When you get into Year One it's not as hard as you think. I mean you think it's going to be hard and the adults are going to be stricter but it's not really. You get used to doing more work and the adults are nice and friendly

Rather than bombarding the novices with too much information about Year One, which could have been confusing and off putting (Fabian and Dunlop 2007), Ben had successfully managed to maintain a balance between making the next stage of education appealing to the novices whilst establishing realistic expectations

(Hammond 1992). Guidance and support from more experienced peers (like Ben) was preparing the novices for future involvement in Year One (Robbins 2003). This exemplified how interactions between communities form a crucial part of the transition process and how strong links between micro-systems (or in this case year groups) has the potential to support transition and give the less powerful a voice (Foucault 1979). I conjectured that what made Ben a reliable and effective broker was his knowledge and understanding of the Year One practices (for example, the pink and green marking); his recent first-hand experience of the Reception to Year One transition and his ability to apply his experiences to the mentoring role.

Although many of the experts were guided by their own pre-occupations, interests and skills, some children were perceptive enough to tailor their tours to the novices' interests from the onset. Emily, for example, asked Ruby (a novice)

What do you like doing? If you tell me what you like I can show you where to do it in Year One ([Appendix Seventeen](#)).

and James told one of the Reception teachers

I'm going to show Rupert the building area first because I know he likes building

This nurturing approach to the tours exemplified a mature understanding of how to put the novices at ease that was based on personal knowledge of what it is like to be a novice.

One particularly innovative approach to the orientation tours was Charlie's self-guided tour ([Appendix Fifteen](#)) which enabled the novices to negotiate the classroom independently by way of a trail of strategically positioned *Talking Tins*. The *Talking Tins* are a versatile classroom resource which were used by the adults

and children in a range of different ways to support and enhance learning. For example, children who have difficulty remembering a sentence they want to write might record the sentence first on a *Talking Tin*. They can then play back their recording as many times as necessary during the process of writing to support their recall. Alternatively, a teacher might use *Talking Tins* to encourage children's interaction with a display or to enable children to access a classroom challenge independently. In this case, Charlie recorded information about different areas of the classroom on the *Talking Tins* for the novices to self-access. The plan was simple and effective. In order to orientate the novices around a specific classroom route, Charlie numbered each of the *Talking Tins*. He greeted his tour group of novices at the doorway of the Year One classroom and instructed them how to use the tins in numerical order. He then showed them how to press the button on tin number one, which said 'Welcome to Year One. I hope you enjoy this tour. Now find tin two'. After that (unless they had any problems which Charlie assured them he would 'sort out') the novices were on their own to independently access the tour. This included a recorded guide to the building blocks and an explanation of how the phonic display could be used to support reading and writing. I particularly enjoyed Charlie's welcoming recording in the book area, which said 'You can choose your favourite book and sit on a comfortable cushion with your friend' and the tin by the fruit basket which said 'Help yourself to a fruit. Apples and bananas are best'.

Charlie's unusual approach to the tours understandably proved very popular with the novices, who queued up to be included. When I asked Charlie how he had thought to use the *tins* so creatively, he told me that he had visited museums where you could listen to audio recordings as you walked around, for example,

At the Roman Baths there's numbers you press on your recorder when you walk round and it tells you all about what you are looking at.....They've got them at Stone Henge too, but the Roman Baths are best 'cos there's numbers just for children ([Appendix Ten](#))

I inferred that what made Charlie's tour particularly successful was the way in which it empowered the novices to independently take control of their own learning. What made Charlie a successful tour guide and broker was his ability to apply his own learning experiences in a new context; his knowledge of what aspects of Year One were important to four and five-year olds and his perceptiveness to what engages young children. It was unlikely that any adult would have been able to evoke quite such a sense of independence, empowerment, intrigue and fun as Charlie had created through this peer to peer connection.

The orientation visits were designed to empower the novices with knowledge that would support their transition into Year One, but they were also empowering for the experts (as demonstrated by the way in which Charlie took control of the mentoring process and Ben shared his knowledge with the novices). The sense of power which the role of expert created, however, manifested in different ways for different children. Whilst the majority of the tour guides concentrated on the positive aspects of the classroom and learning in Year One, Billy spent the first five minutes focusing on rules and things you could not do, for example 'That's the teachers cupboard you can't go in it' ([Appendix Seventeen](#)). This indicated that Billy associated his positioning as older expert with the power to control. I conjectured that his perception of the role was based on a model of hierarchical, downward control which circulated around him. It was possible that he considered rules to be the product of a system in which they were created and upheld by those who were positioned on the ladder above. It was interesting to observe how other children asserted their lead with the novices. In contrast to Charlie's self-guided tour which handed back control to the novices, Polly kept a powerful hold over the novice's exploratory visit to Year One. She cautioned her partner to 'stay with me all the time' and her novice companion was only allowed

to touch or 'use' when Polly instructed her that she could do so with a permission such as 'you can have one go if you want' ([Appendix Seventeen](#)).

Another interesting characteristic of many of the tours was the inconspicuous profile of the outdoor provision. Apart from a brief look at (or gesture towards) the outside area, all of the experts focused their tours on the inside of the classroom. I reflected on the possible causes of this indifference. Firstly, the Year One outdoors area was smaller and less inviting than the Reception outdoor space. Secondly, the area was mainly used by Year One children for teacher directed work activities and thus lacked the connotations of freedom which the outdoors usually affords. Thirdly, due to the rigors of the Year One curriculum, outdoors play and learning was an aspect of the provision that often got side-lined or forgotten, hence it was not dominant within Year One discourse. I also considered that the experts might be less proud of the outdoor area due to its meagre status in comparison to the Reception outdoor provision. It was possible that (similarly to an estate agent who avoids spending too much time in an out dated bathroom for fear of impairing a sale) the experts were deviating round this less favourable aspect of Year One because they did not consider it to be a particular selling point. This implied the experts' mature understanding of how to manipulate knowledge and discourse and exemplified how those in a position of power can influence the discourse of a community. Observations of the novices during the tours presented an alternative perspective on the outdoors issue. I found it intriguing that none of the novices asked about or showed much interest in the outside area (especially as the outdoors was such an important aspect of the Reception provision). I asked Ben why he thought this might be. Ben's response was

Well everyone knows that Year R have the best outdoor area and they get more time outside. The Year Ones and Twos tell you you don't get to go outside much when you move up, so you already know before you visit Year One (Reflective Journal entry)

His comment provided an explicit explanation of the way in which school discourse shaped understandings and influenced transition.

Whilst it was relevant to uncover and analyse individual responses to the tours as these provided important detail and humanised the findings, it was also pertinent to reflect on the generic outcomes of the visits. In order to do this reliably, I referred back to the tour videos, photographs and my own reflective notes. Analysing the data for generic outcomes, however, required inference and intuition. In order to increase the validity of potentially unreliable data, I triangulated my reflections with those of my teaching assistant and others who had been there. Triangulation indicated that the mood in the Year One classroom during the visits was informal but purposeful. All of the children showed high levels of engagement in the task at hand. They were chatting, smiling and often laughing. My teaching assistant commented that there was 'a positive buzz in the air'. There was no need for adult support or intervention because all of the children could access and succeed in the task. This provided them with independence and placed them in control of the 'event'. I was particularly impressed with the way in which several of the younger boys (who sometimes found it difficult to focus on a task for extended periods of time) maintained engagement throughout. I attributed this success to a number of contributing factors. Firstly, the children chose how they approached the tours and maintained this control throughout the activity. This enabled them to tailor the tours to their own strengths and demonstrate their knowledge in ways that suited them. Secondly, the tours were a practical activity, not dependent on academic skills (such as writing) so all of the children had the opportunity to succeed. Thirdly, acting as an expert was empowering. It made the children feel that their ideas and perspectives mattered. It also confirmed (if only temporarily) their elevated position on the balance of power in our school.

'Voice' and agency are intrinsically entwined. Involving the children in important tasks (such as, disseminating their resources to the Year R children and supporting them in visits) and research processes (for example, categorising and sorting the data) showed them that their perspectives and voices were being valued, listened to and acted upon - not constrained or ignored. They were able to observe (almost immediately) that their research was making a difference and they were keen to feedback on the successes of their participation. William, for example, told me that Jake (a novice)

was worrying 'cos he thinks he's no good at writing and that's all we do in Year One but I told him that it is ok to be an apprentice and get the teacher to help. He liked the Lego in Year One, so I think he feels ok about it now. I can show him other things he might like and Mrs Winter put my map on the wall so the children can decide what they want to see when they visit ([Appendix Fourteen](#))

The mentoring experience had clearly encouraged William to consider himself as an expert, which must have been personally rewarding and empowering. At a later stage 'William' also participated enthusiastically in the data sorting process, for example, telling me that we needed a category for 'top tips' to help the novices. On reflection, it was hard to determine if it was the experience of helping the novices or active participation in the research process that was most empowering to William. I would argue that it was a combination of the two which contributed to his growing sense of agency and empowerment. His experiences of empowerment and agency, however, were situated within the immediate context – that is, towards the end of the school year when he was undoubtedly feeling confident and knowledgeable about the structures of Year One. It was inevitable that the balance of power and agency would shift for William when he transitioned to Year Two. I was interested to find out how the project had impacted on the novices.

6.1.3 Impact for the novices

Data collected by the Reception staff enabled me to find out what the resources and visits looked like from the novices' perspective. It also helped to measure the impact of the brokerage activities and resources. Feedback from the Reception class adults about our mentoring project was positive. They concluded that the novices had benefited from the experts' resources and their interactions with the experts. On the whole, the novices responded well to being shown around the setting by the experts. (The exceptions were two sets of twins, who preferred the support of their respective siblings during orientation visits.)

The Reception staff reported reassuring reactions from the novices. Ivy (a novice), for example, spent more than ten minutes looking at Rachel's *All About Year One* book with Rachel (an expert) and spontaneously teamed up with Rachel again during the orientation visit. Following the orientation visit Tom (the Reception teacher) asked Ivy what she had found out during her visit to Year One. Ivy said that Rachel had shown her where to go if she wanted to listen to a story CD and shown her how to use the CD player (which was different to the one in the Reception classroom). Ivy reported

I know how to use it now. It's easy. You can listen to the *Gruffalo* and *Stick Man* and there's some new story CDs. There's one about a princess, so it's a little bit the same and a little bit different ([Appendix Sixteen](#))

Knowledge of how to operate the CD player had empowered Ivy to independently access a resource that interested her in the Year One classroom. It also empowered her with knowledge and expertise that she could pass on to others. When Tom suggested that she could show Ruby (another novice) how to use the CD player when they moved into Year One 'because she loves the *Gruffalo* story

too' Ivy responded with enthusiasm and confidence, reassuring Ruby

When we go to Year One, I can show you where the CD player is and how to work it because I know how to. I can show you where the *Gruffalo* book is too ([Appendix Sixteen](#))

Ivy, it seemed, was already beginning her journey from Year One novice to expert (all be it in one small aspect of the Year One classroom) and she was already showing her aptitude to act as a broker for others. Inferring that other novices would have gained knowledge of other aspects of Year One (depending on the differing interests and skills of their expert mentors), I speculated how much more powerful the novice children would be if they collectively shared their new found knowledge with their peers. Ivy's reaction to the CDs on offer also illustrated her comfortable positioning between 'different' and 'familiar'. The location of familiar stories, like *The Gruffalo* and *Stick Man*, alongside new and exciting stories provided a balance between old knowledge and new knowledge and hence afforded a more nuanced approach to difference and change. This excited Ivy's curiosity and capacity for new knowledge whilst also affording her the security of applying her existing knowledge. From a similar perspective Jack reported that

In Year One they have the big wooden bricks like we do. They've got Lego too – with racing driver people and wheels ([Appendix Sixteen](#))

I conjectured that these scenarios had wider implications for approaches to transition which could more effectively support children by dealing with change gradually when the children (and not the school) were ready. This would begin to readdress the concept of school readiness ([see p.52](#)), handing back some control of when and how it happened to the learners involved.

Knowledge of how things worked and what to do in Year One was as important to the novices as what resources were available. Surface transition events, like

'Move Up Day' ([p.21](#)) did not show the children what Year One was like on a day to day basis but modelling how to do things did. James, Billy and Ben's video presentations of the early morning routine and other aspects of Year One were particularly powerful forms of dissemination and popular with many of the novice boys (some of whom watched the same video more than once). I inferred that the videos appealed to the boys because of their amusement factor as well as their visual nature. I wondered, however, how much relevant knowledge the novices had actually absorbed from watching the videos. This question was answered by Jack (a novice) who had not watched the videos but was able to recount a conversation he shared with some novices who had. These children were able to talk Jack through exactly what he would have to do every morning when he arrived at school in Year One by referring back to the video. They also offered to show Jack what to do, which they did with confidence. I attributed the James, Billy and Ben's success in imparting their knowledge to the novice boys to their expert knowledge of how children learn and what captures children's interests. I also speculated that the video presentations were more memorable to the novices because they focused upon children showing children what to expect, rather than adults showing children as is often the case during transition.

Many of the novices remembered Charlie's *Talking Tins* when recounting their experiences of the Year One visits. Lola told two of her friends

You can't get lost in Year One 'cos there are round things you press and they tell you where to go next ([Appendix Fifteen](#))

Oscar encouraged Darren to

ask Charlie to show you the *Talking Tins*. You can find out about Year One by pushing the black buttons. There's lots of them in Year One ([Appendix Fifteen](#))

Although the children also mentioned the experts' maps in the context of finding

their way around Year One, the interactive nature of the *Talking Tins* appealed to their sense of adventure and were thus particularly memorable. Oscar suggested to Tom that the novice children could make a *Talking Tin* hunt to guide new children round the Reception classroom ([Appendix Fifteen](#)). The resource sharing and orientation visits inspired other novices to demonstrate their knowledge and expertise of Reception by making resources. Ethan drew a map of the Reception classroom and displayed it by the door so that ‘visitors (could) find their way around’. Ivy asked one of the Reception adults to help her make a book about Reception for ‘little children’ ([Appendix Fifteen](#)). Jenny had a go at making a ‘Peeghu’ for her sister who was starting in Reception in September ([Appendix Fifteen](#)). Also using techniques which had been modelled by the experts, the puppet show boys demonstrated their new found knowledge of Year One by using their puppets to role play ‘being in Year One’ (figure 6.14) ([Appendix Fifteen](#)). It seemed that, through their participation in the research project, the experts were not only teaching the novices how to be part of the Year One but also the skills and techniques they would need to become mentors themselves. My hope was that this process of knowledge and skill transferal would support the development of a framework for the participation of ‘expert’ children in researching and disseminating ways to support other children facing transition (*Research Question c and d*) that would become embedded in the discourse of our school.

Tommy (puppet 1):	‘What can you do in Year One then?’
Georgie (puppet 2):	‘You can play on computers and there are <i>ipads</i> and there’s lots of Lego’
Tommy (puppet 1):	‘Do you have to do lots of writing in Year One?’
Georgie (puppet2):	‘Yes but you get to do art and projects too’

Figure 6.14 *Transcription of puppet show scenario recorded by Tom (the Reception Teacher)*

The mentoring project clearly motivated and inspired the Reception children and adults. Positive, enthusiastic feedback, however, is likely to accompany any project that excites teachers and children, giving them feelings of being engaged in something special (Gross and Garnett 1994). Analysis of a collection of recorded discussions, field notes, photos and observations gathered during the novices' first two weeks in Year One helped to measure the impact of the brokerage activities and resources. It also affirmed my suspicion that the novices had benefited from the mentoring process. Most of the children transitioned confidently into the classroom, immediately searching out aspects of Year One they had been introduced to by the experts. Ivy, for example, was photographed using the CD player to listen to a story and a group of children headed straight for the creative area where (thanks to Polly's expert instruction) they were able to self-access the resources they needed to commence puppet making. Many of the children also remembered some of the routines that had been disseminated to them by the experts. Brad and Connor successfully negotiated the early morning routine on their very first morning with no adult support and, over the course of the first week, I observed multiple children using the *Talking Tins* as an aid memoire (Reflective Journal entry: 8 September 2014). When I asked a small group of the children if they thought their pre-transition visits to the classroom and interactions with the experts had helped transition into Year One, they responded with comments like:

'Yes 'cos I knew where lots of things were and what there was to play with' 'I knew what to do in the morning because I saw that on the video' (Reflective Journal entry: 15 September 2014)

'I remembered to press the buttons (on the talking tins) when I didn't know what to do' (Reflective Journal entry: 15 September 2014)

Whilst this feedback was all very positive, I did have to consider the fact that I had, in some ways, manufactured the partnership between the experts and

novices. This led me to question if the novices may have been able to negotiate their own places in the community without the support of the experts. In order to answer my queries, I decided to return to two of Bronfenbrenner's hypotheses:

Hypothesis 42:

The extent to which (relevant) valid information, advice and experience are made available enhances development (Bronfenbrenner 1979: 211)

Hypothesis 27:

Developmental potential is enhanced if initial transition into a setting is not made alone (ibid)

I had no doubt that the experts had provided information, experience and advice for the novices. In my opinion, their 'toolkit' was more relevant to the needs and interests of the novices than any that adults could supply. Furthermore, their recent first-hand experience of transition gave them special insider knowledge that could not be replicated by any other adults or peers. This, I believed gave them an advantage over any other potential buddies for the novices. I concluded that they were, therefore, natural brokers of transition in our community.

6.2 Chapter Six Summary

The findings presented in this chapter demonstrate how, working within a comfort zone of their individual skills and interests, the children were able to proficiently pass on their knowledge of Year One, support the new group of children in their transition and, thus, become experts. Their ability to disseminate their knowledge in a way that was meaningful to the new children through self-chosen methods and resources led them to a position of greater empowerment in the community.

Summary of Chapters Five and Six: How the findings thus far contribute to our methodological and theoretical understanding of transition

Through their participation in the research the expert children developed an innovative approach to transition. During their first months in Year One they developed their knowledge and understanding of current Year One discourse and practice by immersing themselves in the community. After this period of apprenticeship, they reflected deeply on their experiences of transition and shared their perspectives. When challenged to use their experiences to help the next cohort of children, they shared their ideas and planned how they would support the novices. They then developed their resources and presented them to the novices. The children's approach provided a framework for the participation of 'expert' children in researching and disseminating ways to support other young children facing transition (figure 6.15). This framework builds on a model which represents the transition as a spiral of transitional of development leading to change, rather than a cycle (figure 6.16).

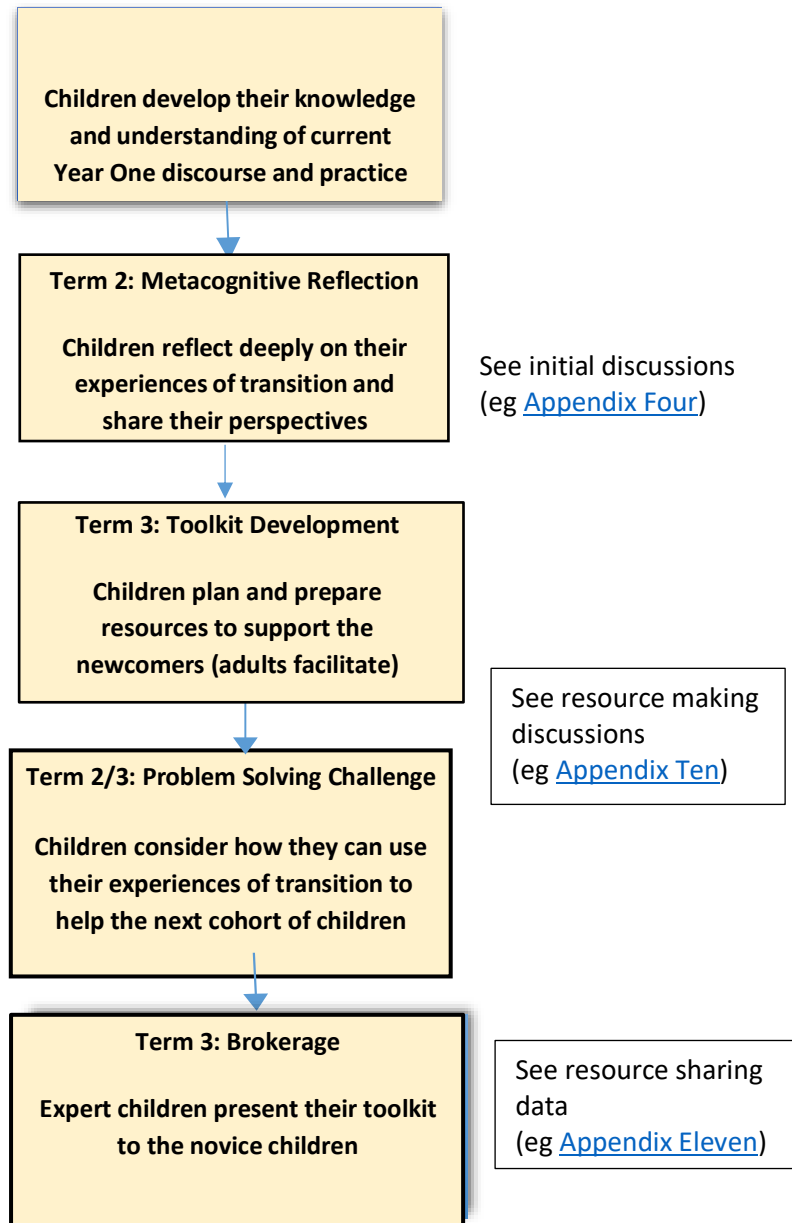


Figure 6.15 Framework for the participation of 'expert' children

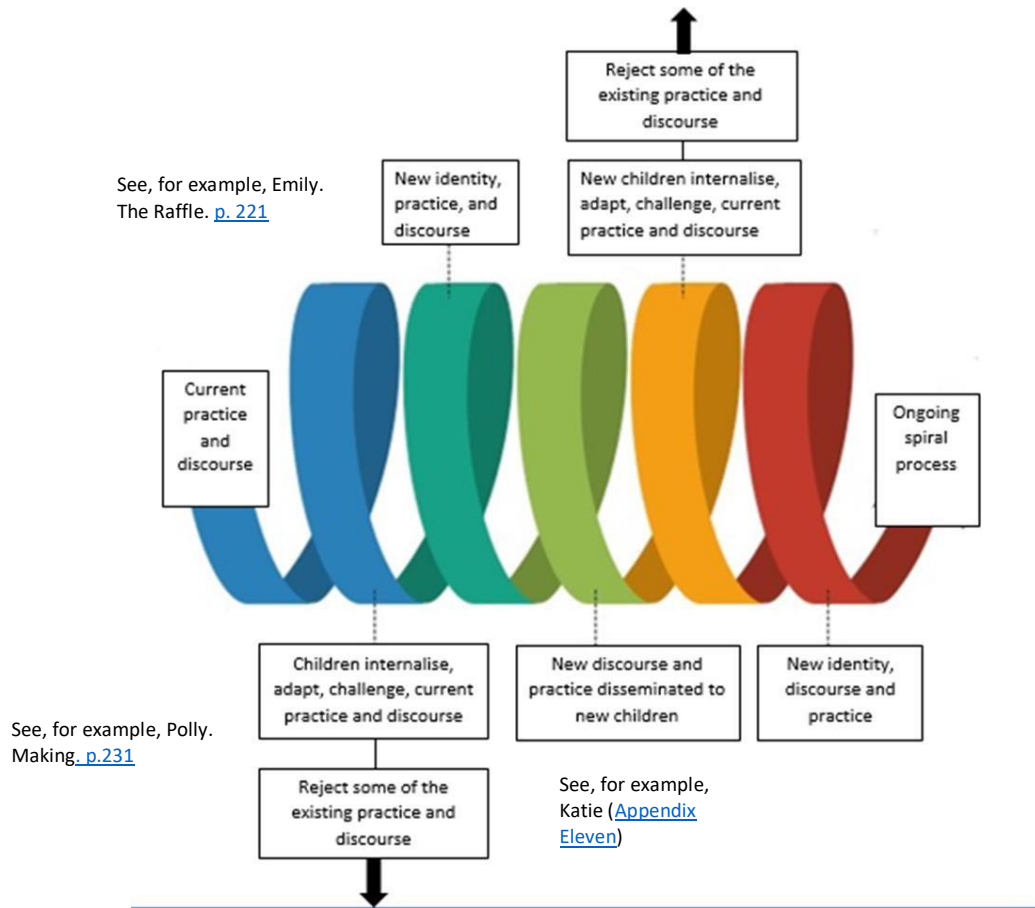


Figure 6.16 *Spiral of Transitional Development Model*

Chapter 7. Findings and Analysis. Future and parallel transitions

Reflection plays an important role throughout Chapters Five, Six and Seven (Findings and Analysis). During initial discussions (Chapter Five), the children reflected on their transition to Year One in order to make sense of their experiences (Brechin, Brown and Eby 2000) (see for example [Appendix Four](#)). In the course of their reflective practice they demonstrated the capacity to think about and consider their experiences and perceptions in context (ibid). They also exposed new affiliations and drew conclusions which guided their action when designing their resources and interacting with the novices (Quinn 1998) (see for example, [Appendix 10](#)). In the latter stages of the research the children reflected on their expert roles and the experience of helping others, for example, during the orientation visits ([Appendix Fourteen](#)) . The junior school children ([Appendix 13](#)) demonstrated how reflective practice during the pilot study had transformed their experiences into a learning situation which they were able to apply to later transitions (for example the move to junior school) and the action of supporting others in transition. My own reflective practice enabled me to use my experiences of the Year One transition to develop a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the children's transition (Thompson and Thompson 2005).

In this chapter I present the findings and analysis of a discussion which took place at our local junior school between myself and a group of the children who had been involved in the original pilot study ([Appendix Thirteen](#)). In this discussion the children reflect on subsequent and ongoing transitions, including the transition between infant and junior school, thus enabling me to identify how the children's involvement in the pilot study impacted on their understanding of transition and prepared them for future transitions. I also reflect on my own journey of transition from Reception to Year One and how this enabled a deeper understanding of the children's experiences.

7.1 Junior school discussions

I was interested to find out how the children's participation in the research impacted on their future transitions. Catching up with a small group of the children who had been involved in the pilot study at our local junior school gave me the opportunity to find out more ([Appendix Thirteen](#)).

Reflecting some of the themes from the pilot study (two years before) and the main research (with the following cohort), the junior children's observations largely related to difference, rules and things you learnt in junior school. Similarity between the aspects of transition that the children were focusing on now; the aspects they had focused on two years before and the aspects of transition their successors had focused on during the main study implied that these were the preoccupations that mattered to children in their early years of schooling. The data generated within the context of a different age group and circumstances repeated many of the themes identified in the main study, thus highlighting threads across transitions that were not exclusively to do with specific shifts from the Foundation Stage to Year One. This made the data particularly powerful and valuable, especially when thinking about school wide strategies for bridging transitions.

7.1.1 Things you learn at junior school

Many of the children commented on the increased work load they experienced at the junior school, for example:

'We learn lots of difficult maths....and do lots and lots of writing'
(Appendix Thirteen 25.54)

'Every morning we have Literacy first, then Reading, then Maths. We

don't get time for anything else – only a quick play time' (Appendix Thirteen 25.52)

'You get proper homework too. Lots of it. Sometimes it takes ages to do it' (Appendix Thirteen 25.53)

Their comments suggested that the junior school routine and timetable asserted greater control over their time and space and afforded them with less choice. Alongside an increased workload there were also greater expectations placed upon the children, for example:

'The teachers tell you you have to write neatly but it's hard when there's not much time and you have to finish' (Appendix Thirteen 25.55)

'If you write neatly and finish the teacher is really happy' (Appendix Thirteen 25.57)

'You learn interesting stuff but there's so much of it. It's hard to remember everything' (Appendix Thirteen 25.46)

This intensified the pressure that transition already placed on the children.

Mary's comment: 'If you don't do your best writing the teacher can make you do it again' (Appendix Thirteen 25.56)

implied that her teacher had (in monitoring and controlling the time, space and learning patterns of the children) positioned herself as a more powerful authority (Giddens 1987; Devine 1998). Once again, I was reminded of Foucault's (1979) references to an 'analytical pedagogy' which can be created by limiting and controlling children's movement to maximise discipline and learning (Devine 2002). I was also left wondering if the manner in which Mary's time was controlled in school enabled her to form particular perspectives relating to her own positioning, rights and status in school (Devine 2002). If so, I suspected that these would contribute to any feelings of disempowerment that Mary may be experiencing as a result of her transition. From my perspective as a teacher, however, I was able to empathise with Mary's teacher who was positioned within an educational system which controlled teaching and learning to the extent that it

dictated what was learnt and how that learning took place, thereby diminishing the teacher's independence and autonomy as well as that of the children. These measures of control, however, would also limit the teacher's capacity to react reflexively to transition.

Oscar insightfully drew attention to some of the more subtle control strategies his teachers adopted to induce compliance and effort from children:

'If you do good work in Maths or Literacy you can get a *Good Work Award* or *Star of the Week*' (Appendix Thirteen 25.61)

Offering incentives in return for work effort is particularly pertinent to understanding interaction patterns in the classroom and exemplifies the dialectic of control (Giddens 1984) which exists in all relations centered upon power.

Mary's observation that:

'Sometimes William pretends he has lost his pencil or something, so he doesn't have to do the work' (Appendix Thirteen 25.50)

exemplified the passive form of resistance (for example, body language, working slowly, forgetting books) that children sometimes deploy in an attempt to alter the balance of power during classroom situations. I suspected that William's 'lost pencil' strategy could be a reflexive response that was indicative of the anxiety caused by his transition to a more demanding curriculum.

The children's comments relating to what they learnt indicated that they had formed distinct views about what was valued in junior school education (mainly maths, reading and writing) and the superiority of work over play.

'We haven't really done much art yet and we don't get to do making anymore. Making is only at little school. Here you don't get time' (Appendix Thirteen 25.46)

Some of the children were able to provide clear rationales for a curriculum which prioritised some aspects of learning and silenced others. Their observations were mature and insightful. Isabelle, for example, commented that they did

‘more real learning like reading, writing and maths at school.....(because) you wouldn’t be able to do a nice job when you are older if you didn’t learn to do those things at school’ (Appendix Thirteen 25.62)

I conjectured that Isabelle’s understanding of the nature and purpose of school learning had developed through exposure to the affordances and discourse (Giddens 1979; Gibson and Pick 2000) of school as well as discourse from the wider community (for example, parents and older children). Her definition of ‘real learning’ exemplified how increased control over the children’s time and space in junior school had redefined their experience of education resulting in a narrowing of their perspectives of what constituted ‘real learning’ (Devine 2002).

Now in their fourth year of compulsory education, these Year Three children clearly viewed the purpose of education in terms of preparation for future work roles. Their ‘instrumental orientation’ to school (Devine, 2002, p.39) had resulted in them forming a hierarchy of value relating to the Year Three curriculum which prioritised subjects that were perceived to have a distinct work/life focus. Like Isabelle, other children also appeared acquiescent in the face of the control placed over them through the curriculum. Some children, however, overtly questioned the control that the curriculum, teachers and education exercised over them. Oscar, for example, (who had developed into an enthusiastic and talented sportsman) voiced his dissatisfaction with this aspect of the curriculum when he argued

'Yeh, but that's ok if you're good at those things and you want to be someone who needs to be good at those things like a doctor or policeman, but I want to be a sports' coach like Phil so I should get to do more PE' (Appendix Thirteen 25.63)

In response to this comment, Isabelle rationalised

'I think it's because there's not enough time to do everything and we can do stuff like sports and art and craft at home or at a club.....At school the teachers have to teach you the important stuff' (Appendix Thirteen 25.64)

I found it interesting that Isabelle did not consider sports, art and craft to be 'important stuff'. This caused me to consider how children like Oscar and Joshua ([see p.241](#)) whose talents and interests lay outside of the 'real subjects' and 'important stuff' Isabelle had mentioned) fared within a system that silenced subjects like art and PE. I also contemplated how the reduction of subjects that were traditionally more appealing (in both content and methodology) to children's preference for fun and activity in learning and the ever increasing pressure to work through formal education materials as they progressed through primary school affected their sense of belonging and connection to school, education and the experience of learning. Legitimised by a discourse which prioritises adult/future-oriented needs and expectations over present lived experience (Devine 2002), these children appeared to be experiencing school and schooling as something that is 'done to' children. It seemed to me that the focus of their education was on preparing them as future citizens and equipping them with the skills (productivity, competitiveness, attitude and control) to contribute as adults to the needs of the modern industrial/postindustrialised society' (Devine 2002: 312). In doing so, however, the 'system' was restricting their autonomy, creativity and independence and, thereby, denying them the opportunity to develop the very skills which are sought after by today's employees (DfES, 2003). Control over the children's time and space in school was once again constructing them in particular ways relative to adults and defining their experience of education in relatively narrow and instrumental terms (Devine 2002). I debated if these issues were magnified as the

children moved on to junior school or whether the children were now more sensitised to the changes that occurred as a result of transition. They were certainly able to reflect deeply on the situation and once again I wondered if this was in some ways attributable to their involvement in the pilot study.

7.1.2 Rules

Analogous with previous data, rules were a prominent feature of the discussions ([Appendix Five](#)). Rather than referencing specific rules (as many of the children had done during the pilot or main study interviews), however, the Year Three children's comments focused mainly on the school's approach to behaviour and discipline and rules in general, for example:

'There's lots of rules to follow and if you forget them or break them you get into trouble' (Appendix Thirteen 25.31)

'Some rules are the same as (infant school)' (Appendix Thirteen 25.38)

'The teachers make the rules, not the children' 'The teachers are stricter' (Appendix Thirteen 25.34)

'The teachers make the rules 'cos they're the bosses' (Appendix Thirteen 25.35)

The shift in focus from specific rules (for example 'don't run in school') to the process of making and asserting the rules and why there were so many suggested that the children were beginning to show an awareness of rights, democracy and the effects of power relationships in the community. These children were operating within a disciplinary framework in which they were required to monitor their behaviour in line with a series of rules and regulations (Foucault 1982).

The following conversation between Oscar and Emily illustrated contrasting

perceptions of the fairness and legitimacy of the rule process as well as conflicting sensitivities to their positioning on the balance of power in the Junior School.

Oscar (*empowered*): 'It would be fairer if the children got together to make some of the rules' (Appendix Thirteen 25.39)

Emily (*disempowered*): 'Yeh, but if the teachers let the children decide on all the rules they wouldn't all be sensible or safe or helpful. Like if the children said they wanted to play all day they wouldn't be learning. Sometimes the teachers know what's best for the children, even if they don't like it' (Appendix Thirteen 25.41)

Oscar: 'Yeh, but children should get to decide some of the rules because they're the ones that have to follow them' (Appendix Thirteen 25.42)

Emily's argument was clearly situated within a discourse relating to the adult responsibility to guide and protect children. This discourse disempowered children. Oscar's perspective, on the other hand, drew on discourse which sought a greater voice for children and thereby empowered them. Although his comments presented a slightly naïve perspective in contrast to Emily's astuteness, I felt positive about the fact that he had the confidence to challenge the existing discourse and practice and come up with solutions to the problem.

Many of the children's comments relating to their interactions with teachers, however, were embedded within a discourse of subordination – in which they perceived themselves as individuals with subordinate status within the school. This was communicated to them in particular through the authoritative resources teachers drew on in the course of their daily interaction, directing and constraining children in the activities they could pursue. For example:

'You don't get to choose what you do at (junior school). The teacher tells you what you're doing and there's a timetable that tells everyone what they have to do. Sometimes it gets a bit boring. It would be good to choose sometime' (Appendix Thirteen 25.44)

'Some days you only get to see your best friend at playtime. That's not really fair' (Appendix Thirteen 25.59)

Ben's comment that:

'There's so many rules. You can't always remember them (Appendix Thirteen 25.32)

inferred that (unlike their infant school experiences) weaker classification and framing within the junior school pedagogy (Bernstein 1990, 1996) had prevented the children from achieving a complete understanding of the rules and why some specific practices operated in the community. I was reminded that Bernstein equates a good understanding of rules to future success at school (Bernstein 1975). Rachel's observation that:

'You don't get so many chances. If you break the rules that's it. I thought it was hard at first but we're in junior school now. At secondary school there's probably no chances. You have to do the rules. That's it' (Appendix Thirteen 25.34)

implied that (just as the children had experienced when they moved from the Foundation Stage to Key Stage One) there had been a heightening of the fresh hold between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour when the children moved onto junior school. It appeared that infant school was more tolerant of mistakes made by younger children, but as children got older, they were increasingly expected to internalise the rules and self-regulate. I conjectured that inconsistencies in the way in which the rule system operated across key stages must have made transition difficult. The children, however, accepted that this was the way it was. Past experience led them to believe that this was part and parcel of the transition process and they were able to make predictions for the future based on the patterns they had observed.

During our discussions, it was interesting to note how the children's sense of

hierarchy and the workings of power in their environment had developed since I had last seen them. Ben particularly voiced how the children's 'placing' had changed when they moved to the junior school, offering a clear enunciation of their positioning at the bottom end of the social hierarchy within the school:

'When we were in Year Two, we were the oldest in the school so we could make some of the rules, but now we're the youngest so older kids tell us what to do' (Appendix Thirteen 25.42)

Mary also exemplified her heightened awareness of the workings of power and control across the school through her observations about the head teacher:

'Mrs..... runs the school. She is the most important person in the school. She tells the teachers what to do and they tell the children' (Appendix Thirteen 25.10)

As her knowledge and understanding of the power chains had developed so had Mary's ability of to identify the knock-on effects along the chain. This became evident in her defense of her teacher:

'She has to get you to finish your work before you go out to play because otherwise Mrs....(head teacher) will say she's not doing her job properly, so it's not her fault really' (Appendix Thirteen 25.60)

Another aspect of the interviews that was indicative of the children's developing maturity and understanding of school discourse was their ability to make links between control and learning.

'The teachers tell you where to sit. You're not allowed to sit with your friend cos friends chat and then you might not get all your work done' (Appendix Thirteen 25.58)

Children's relationships with their teachers, however, were not on the whole negative. Although they grumbled about their subordinate status, they generally

perceived their teachers to be kind and caring and wanted to have a positive relationship with them.

Through their experience of the hidden curriculum (Bernstein 1975), the children had begun to understand the purpose of education in terms of the control and discipline of self (for example, following the rules) and the development of a positive work ethic (for example, completing their work and keeping it neat). Their perceptions that teachers liked children who work hard and behaved well in school indicated that they had internalised norms relating to self-control and productivity. They perceived learning to be 'work' and work to be an integral part of school. Added to the work productivity pressures relating to quality, quantity and speed, freedom, choice and flexibility in the curriculum diminished as they transited through the education system.

7.1.3 Difference

Similarly, to the pilot and main studies, the difference between infant and junior school featured predominantly in discussions with the Year Three children. Also akin to the former studies, space and environments were key characteristics of difference to which the children alluded:

'Its a lot bigger..... there are lots more classrooms and teachers and children....'(Appendix Thirteen 25.3)

'The playgrounds gigantic and much nosier than infant school. That's scary at first but you get used to it' (Appendix Thirteen 25.4)

'The playgrounds bigger but there's not as much stuff to play with. At (infant school) we had a trim trail and toys to play with and a sandpit' (Appendix Thirteen 25.5.)

'The lunch hall is really big and noisy. There's lots of dinner ladies and no one tells you what to do when you start. You just have to watch what the older children are doing and copy.' (Appendix Thirteen 25.6)

'At (infant school) your mum or dad takes you to school so you don't worry. They can help you with your stuff and talk to the teacher about things' (Appendix Thirteen 25.18)

Added to the pressure of coping with a larger school, the children also had to contend with other changes that came with the transition, for example, travelling on the school bus:

'Going on the bus is really scary when you start. There's all the big children and you don't know where to sit. No one really tells you. I didn't like it at first' (Appendix Thirteen 25.11)

Their comments reminded me of the experience of arriving in a new country with lots of strangers. That feeling of being lost and on your own, when you desperately want to locate someone or something that will help you to find your way and searching for some kind of bridging.

'I was excited about going on the bus but I didn't like as much as I thought I would on the first day. It's quite noisy and you don't always know how long it will take.....nobody really tells you what it's going to be like. You just have to find out yourself' (Appendix Thirteen 25.11)

'There's lots of work at (junior school). A lot more than at (infant school). I mean even more than you do in Year One or Two. No one really tells you that's what it's going to be like. You just find out.' (Appendix Thirteen 25.47)

These children seemed more attuned to 'difference' as part of the normal cycle of transition: recognising it as a temporary concept to which one eventually became attuned. Rachel, for example, commented that

'It's always scary when you move to a new class because you don't know stuff and you don't know what will happen.....You get used to it in the end' (Appendix Thirteen 25.19)

Other children also voiced their understanding of the transition process as a temporary state:

‘When I was worried about moving to my mum told me to remember when I moved to (infant school) and when I moved class before. I got used to it and you get to like the new thing’ (Appendix Thirteen 25.24)

‘You have to keep reminding yourself that you always feel bad and odd when you move somewhere new but its will be ok in the end’ (Appendix Thirteen 25.25)

Isabelle’s words of wisdom, in particular, connected the processes of transition and growing up:

‘If moving was easy you wouldn’t be ready for bigger moves you do when you’re an adult – like moving to a new country or house or something’ (Appendix Thirteen 25.28)

The children’s self-assured approach to transition was reassuring. They appeared to have a greater metacognitive capacity to reflect on and articulate their reactions to transition. They also seemed more attuned to articulating about transition. Their ability to see past the initial feelings of fear and disorientation associated with their most recent transition could well have been because they were two years older. Their rational response could also have been supported by their past experience of transition and the experience of explicit research into transition during the pilot study. I debated if the children had been able to transit better because they were familiar with the processes of transition and been explicitly involved in the meta-cognitive experience of discussing it.

The fact that nobody had explicitly told them about many aspects of the junior school, however, was significant. Not having information was disempowering. It was a negative aspect of transition that could so easily have been rectified by involving experienced junior school children in the transition process via the framework developed in the infant school ([figure 7.2](#)). It also reinforced the value of making things explicit to children and, in particular, making transition visible. I was interested to find out if the children could also apply their past experiences to supporting others in their transition to the junior school. I asked the children what

might have helped them during their move to junior school and if they had any suggestions that would help the next cohort of children. The maturity of their responses was impressive. The children were able to reflect upon their transitional experiences and, using the framework (figure 7.2), work with me to develop an action plan for helping others. Oscar, for instance, commented that

‘it’s a bit scary at first. You have to find your way around and sometimes you get lost....it would have been helpful to have a map’ (Appendix Thirteen 25.66)

whilst Emily suggested

‘I think it would have been good if the (junior school) children had come to talk to us at (infant school). Then we could have asked them questions and they could have told us all the stuff we had to know’ (Appendix Thirteen 25.70)

Other children were also empowered to initiate ideas and make changes that could well have been based on their experiences in the pilot. Their solutions illustrated their growing recognition of the relationship between discourse, knowledge and power, as well as their understanding of how important interactions between microsystems are during a time of transition (Dockett and Perry 2003).

‘The children could have taken photos of (junior school) and brought them to (infant school) to show us. It would have made it more real’ (Appendix Thirteen 25.71)

‘When we move to Year 4 I think we will be more helpful to the new children ‘cos we know what it’s like’ (Appendix Thirteen 25.72)

‘If we sit with the Year Threes on the bus we could talk to them and tell what they need to know’ (Appendix Thirteen 25.74)

Several of the children explicitly referred to their involvement in the pilot study in order to support their ideas.

‘When we were in Year One we made maps to help the Reception children. We could make maps of (junior school) to help the Year 2s when

they visit' (Appendix Thirteen 25.67)

Their past experience of supporting others appeared to bestow them with the knowledge and confidence to address the specific transitional problems sensitively in their immediate context

'I might make a poster to welcome the Year Threes and put it on the bus stop on their first day' (Appendix Thirteen 25.75)

It also enabled them to critique the existing transition arrangements; identify potential problems and come up with solutions:

'The mums and dads get a book telling them all about (junior school) but the children don't. The Year Threes could have made a book to tell us about (junior school)' (Appendix Thirteen 25.77)

Sadly, some children considered the impact of the Year Three curriculum to be a barrier to brokerage:

'When you get to (junior school) the teachers might tell a bigger child to show you round but they don't have much time because they have work to do. You can't remember it all 'cos there's too much to learn and they do it quick' (Appendix Thirteen 25.69)

'We could make books and take photos to help the Year Threes but we would have to do it in our own time 'cos we've got too much other work to do in class' (Appendix Thirteen 25.76)

However, by the end of our discussion the group had identified a list of benefits which outweighed any negatives associated with helping others to negotiate the transition:

'Experts know it all 'cos they've done it so they are the best people to let the new people' (Appendix Thirteen 25.82)

'Children can tell the new children what it's really like. Teachers will only tell them the things they want them to know – just the good stuff' (Appendix Thirteen 25.83)

'If you are busy making things to help the new children you forget to

worry about your next move so it helps you too' (Appendix Thirteen 25.85)

'I think every class should help the next class because it makes everybody feel better' 'When you know things it's easy but if you don't know things its tricky' (Appendix Thirteen 25.84)

7.1.4 Junior School Discussion Summary

Reflection enabled the junior school children to make sense of their experiences by scrutinising them in context (Brechin, Brown and Eby 2000). Throughout the discussions the children demonstrated their ability to consider their experiences, ideas and perceptions, from which they were able to uncover new relationships and make suppositions that could guide future actions (Quinn 1998).

The findings of discussions with the junior school children revealed that, through their involvement in the pilot study they had become experts in researching transition and supporting others to transit from one stage of education to the next. They were thinking like transition experts and talking like experts. They could identify important issues relating to transition and articulate them clearly (unlike many of the adults). They also appeared to recognise their own expertise. This suggested that their participation in the pilot study was far more than an isolated experience. The project had encouraged them to become more reflective and provided them with the knowledge and skills to proactively approach future transitions. In order to shed more light on the 'business of transition, I referred to my own personal reflections on transition.

7.2 Researcher's Reflections

My reflective journal enabled analysis of my journey of transition alongside that of

the children. Entries in my journal suggested that my perceptions of Year One, at the time of transition, were not dissimilar to the children's. As the study progressed, I was able to identify aspects of the children's transitional experiences which connected with my own, as well as significant differences in our transitional experiences. My experiences and reflections enabled me to develop a deeper understanding of the children's transitional experiences. They also sensitised me to the ways in which power and knowledge relationships were constructed through the discourse and practices of Year One ([research question a](#)) and advanced my critical analysis of the children's perspectives of transition within the context of power/knowledge relationships ([research objective 1](#)).

In this section of the Findings/Analysis I explore the way in which I navigated my way through Year One and how my subjectivity shifted within the relations of power and knowledge to produce different savoir that defined and changed the way I participated in Year One. I interrogate my responses to the power/knowledge relations and practices that produced me first as a novice and then as an expert. I also use my journal entries to exemplify the ways in which power and knowledge played out and enabled something different as I journeyed through Year One and how my growing expertise impacted upon the children's experiences. Specifically, in this section, I examine my perceptions of transition, the confining Year One curriculum and the novice to expert journey.

Similar to the children I experienced a combination of both positive and negative feelings as I prepared to make the transition from Reception to Year One (see p.192).

On 21 March, 2014 I wrote in my reflective journal:

Today I was offered the position of Year One teacher at..... This is a good opportunity for me to learn something new and develop professionally. I've accepted

Spurred on by the rhetoric of continued professional development (Simons 1990), I was excited to be moving to a different year group and relished the opportunity to take on new challenges and learn new skills and competencies. In a way, the move into Key Stage One teaching represented progression for me. Although I knew in my heart that being a teacher in Reception was an important and responsible position, (not least because the children's experiences in Reception impacted profoundly on their future (TACTYC 2017) past experience suggested that Reception teachers were not always given credit for their role and were sometimes treated differently by teachers in other year groups. Comments from other teachers at school like 'you probably don't need use the photocopier much in Reception because you mostly play' and 'this training doesn't really apply to Reception teachers' reinforced the notion that Reception teachers were inferior to their Key Stage One colleagues. Over the years I had also heard friends and family outside of the profession telling others that I was 'only a reception teacher' and 'all the children (in my class) did was play' so I 'did not have to do much teaching or planning'. Hence my transition into Year One felt in some ways like a promotion and an opportunity to prove myself as a 'real' teacher.

I also worried about the move to Year One. Like the children, my concerns focused largely on the Year One curriculum, workload and expectations. My journal entry on 15 May, 2014 read:

Feeling a bit nervous about the move now. It feels like a big leap and I am not sure I am up to the job

From my perspective, school discourse supported the notion that Year One was a particularly important year for children, during which they were expected to make huge progress. In addition, discourse surrounding the 'new' National Curriculum (DfE 2013; Ofsted 2017) implied increased expectations of what should be taught and learnt in Year One (see p.292). I worried that my limited knowledge and understanding of Year One would impact upon my performance and that I might

not live up the expectations of my colleagues and superiors.

Perpetual scrutiny in school creates conditions which influence the micro-politics of school life; it positions teachers and influences their professional identities and sense of self (Hall and Noyles 2009). Year One teachers are required to achieve targets for every child, determined by the Head Teacher and based on Reception data. Many Year One teachers, however, argue that the early learning goals which are central to Reception data are not aligned with the expectations of Year One (Ofsted 2017). In contrast to Reception practice which measures children's progress using a variety of qualitative evidence (for example observations and practitioner dialogue), in Year One and above there is an increased emphasis on quantitative evidence and data, for example, cohort tracking and children's books.

Although, like the children, I approached the transition to Year One with mixed emotions, I was aware that the extent to which the children and I were able to choose whether or not to participate in the transition was likely to impact significantly on our transitional experiences. I had been given the option to transit to a different year group. I was able to base my decision on my professional and my local knowledge (Griseri 1998: Thompson and Thompson 2008) and, thus, retain some control over the direction my professional life would take. The children's path through infant school and beyond, however, was determined by the teachers, school and wider education system, leaving them with little or no power to negotiate or challenge what had been mapped out for them by those in power (Hall and Noyles 2009).

Similar to the children's experiences ([p.21](#)), my predecessor planned a series of events to support my transition into Year One and the new school. The summer fair presented an informal opportunity for me to get to know the staff, children and their families and to integrate into school life. From my peripheral positioning, I was able to observe the practices of the multiple communities who

converged at the fair. I also began to develop an understanding of some of the multiple power relationships which circulated within the community. My journal entry on 2 June, 2014 read:

..... (my predecessor) said that he would 'introduce me to a few important people'. Mrs. Peters (the chair of the Parent/Teacher Association) is obviously a very powerful figure. I was also introduced to Charlotte and Frances (teaching assistants). Charlotte told me she has been at the school for 24 years so if I need to know anything at all I should ask her

My discussion with Charlotte revealed that she had lived in the local community since childhood. She, therefore, possessed an in-depth knowledge of the many of the families of children who attended the school. Charlotte's interactions at the fair confirmed that she was a respected and trusted member of the community. This made her a valuable broker – not only between the school, the families and the wider community but also for me as an outsider. My predecessor confirmed Charlotte's powerful positioning in the community when he told me:

'If I want to make any changes, I always run it by Charlotte first. Often she tells me it's been done before and it hasn't worked. It leaves me time in the long run'

Established members of a community are often gatekeepers for change. Charlotte's local and official knowledge made her an expert. Her expert positioning made her a powerful force in the school and wider community.

Parent relationships was another aspect of power that was particularly show cased at the Fair. There was a definite hierarchy of parents and where a parent was positioned in the power relationships was dependent on a number of factors, including whether they had other children who had transited through the school, whether they belonged to the Parent Teacher Association and whether they came into school regularly to help as a volunteer. This criterion linked closely to knowledge. A parent who helped as a volunteer, for example, had insider

knowledge of what went on in school. A parent who had had more than one child move through the school knew the systems and how they worked. Like Charlotte, these parents' knowledge and expertise made them successful brokers. Other parents relied upon them for information and models. This made them powerful within the community of parents and as vehicles by which power circulated around the wider community. Similar to the child brokers in this research, experienced parents had the power to keep regimes of truth in circulation and also to make changes. My predecessor asserted the status of parent power when he observed:

'The parents will like it that you came to the fair.... It's good that you've had the opportunity to talk to some of them. They'll spread the word that you are friendly and approachable.... It's good PR for when you start in Year One'

My experiences at the summer fair affirmed the strong link between power and knowledge. Like Emily and James, I recognised the benefits of informed knowledge of the community (see p.232 and p.208). As a novice I sought a 'this is how we do it in Year One manual' which would provide me with a series of fail safe formulas to scaffold induction into Year One.

Similar to the experiences of the novice children involved in the research project, the process of brokerage provided me with valid information and advice and ensured that my initial transition into Year One was not made alone (Bronfenbrenner 1979). Established timetables and systems provided a 'how to succeed in Year One framework'. Being told or shown what to do by more experienced colleagues supported my transition. I also had to agree with James' observation that it saved a lot of time and trouble if you were explicitly told things, rather than having to work it out for yourself (see p.208). My experiences on the receiving end of brokerage caused me to appreciate the significance of the children's role in the research. Some of the knowledge that was transferred to

me via my predecessors empowered me in my new role as a Year One teacher. Being told explicitly about the school's approach to daily worship, for example, prepared me for the event. Some aspects of the handover process, however, were less empowering.

Within the contentious and fragile process of transitions, power can manifest in the form of empowerment or domination, depending on the structuring of the setting (Foucault 1984). During the process of handover my predecessor provided me with maps and templates which would enable me to meet the demands of a Key Stage One curriculum. This discourse highlighted rigorous timetabling as key to meeting Year One expectations. In Reception, I was used to acting reflexively to the flow of a school day and to the children's needs so I found such precise timetabling frightening. On 14 June, 2014 I noted in my reflective journal:

Worship 9.15, Reading Groups 9.30, English 9.45 MUST START PROMPTLY, Playtime 10.45, Maths 11.00. Start sending children to lunch at 12.07! – better get myself an alarm clock!!

My predecessor's confidence in the benefits of this daily routine was supported in the classroom by a prominently displayed visual timetable. This striking and symbolic affordance of the classroom provided a very explicit and graphic reminder of the requirement to follow a prescribed programme of Maths and Literacy objectives and how this requirement would control a large proportion of my time and space, as well as that of the children. The timetable also highlighted a notable reduction in outdoor access and 'Discovery Time' ([p.216](#)).

Waite (2011) argues that the outdoors supports transition. Use of the outdoors had been an integral part of my Reception practice. Like the children I had enjoyed a free flow between indoor and outdoor provision. How to incorporate the outdoors into the Year One curriculum and over timetabled day, however, was a constant problem. I found that standard assessment tests and performance

pressures suppressed my will to make use of the outdoors resulting in a narrower interpretation of outdoor learning's potential benefits. On more than one occasion I noted in my reflective journal my disappointment in myself because I had 'forgotten to use the outside'. The dilemma was the same when it came to 'Discovery Time'. On 15 March, 2015 I recorded in my journal:

The children have all but given up asking about discovery time. They used to ask all the time but now they realise that some days there just isn't time. We fit it in when we can

Reflecting critically on my observations, I noted a difference between my reflective response to the confines of a more formal approach to learning and that of the children. Armed with a framework of theoretical concepts which I drew upon to make sense of my experiences and the situation at hand (Griseri 1998: Thompson and Thompson 2008), I was beginning to question aspects of Year One which opposed my pedagogical beliefs. This theoretical framework consisted of both formal and informal knowledge: the former deriving from educational sources and the latter from my life experiences (Thompson and Thompson 2008). Most of the children at this stage in the research, however, were largely accepting of the way things were in Year One. I conjectured that these children were drawing implicitly on knowledge they had acquired without awareness (ibid) whilst my own reflections were supported by a more open knowledge that was explicit, open to scrutiny and challenge and that could be improved on or developed over time (Thompson and Thompson 2008). My hope was that providing the children with regular opportunities to practice the skill of reflection would encourage them to look back at their experiences in a critical way, using the results to this process, together with professional knowledge, to tackle new situations (Proctor 1993).

My experience and ontological beliefs convinced me that allowing children to lead their learning permits a more personalised pedagogical approach, but the burden

of curriculum requirements caused me to choose structure over discovery. Contrary to research which suggests that personal values may impede change in practice (Keichtermans 2005), it seemed that (as a novice) the performance imperative dominated my value-based pedagogy when they were seen as conflicting. This impacted on the children's learning.

Moving into a new classroom in a new school represented a fresh start and an opportunity to make a new workspace my own. Like the children, however, I found that my practice in Year One was constrained by timetables, routines and control of space. The physical environment of Year One was similar to Year Two. This was sold to me as an intentional strategy which prepared the children for the rigors of Year Two and thus supported their next transition. This readiness model was also apparent in the current teaching and learning model. Contrary to my belief that transition is about 'the setting fitting the children and not the children fitting the setting' (Bryce-Clegg 2017: 102), getting the children 'ready for Year Two' was part of the school discourse and an expected responsibility of the Year One teacher.

The classroom contained ten rectangular tables arranged in clusters of two or three (some clusters were partitioned by divider boards). There were enough chairs for a whole class of thirty children to sit down at the same time. A carpet space big enough for the class was left unoccupied in front of an interactive whiteboard and the teacher's chair. This left very little space for any other activities. The entire classroom layout was almost exactly as Katie had illustrated in her map (see p.222). In my journal on 27 July, 2014 I commented:

The classroom layout supports a formal approach to learning. Not what I am used to but again I feel obliged to retain what has been tried and tested. Thankfully says I can start the year with a few less tables with the view to replacing them by Christmas when 'I will need the tables for an increasing number of whole class writing and maths tasks

Every wall in the classroom was utilised to support learning. The 'learning walls' (as they were often called) also contributed to the maintenance of a Year One discourse which prioritised learning in reading, writing and maths. They were used to instruct rather than celebrate learning. Large phoneme sound cards, for example, were displayed on a central display board. On another board there was a display of common exception words (see glossary). Two further display boards were used as WAGOLL boards (what a good one looks like) for maths and writing. The purpose of the WAGOLL boards was to provide children with examples of good work on which to model their own writing or maths. One piece of writing, for example, was decorated with a speech bubble which read:

This is a good piece of writing becausehas punctuated his sentence with a capital letter, finger spaces and a full stop

On the maths WAGOLL board children's work was praised because they had used specific strategies for addition, for example, counting on along a number line. The WAGOLL boards represented a form of control over the children and me. They implied an approach to teaching and learning that was based on formulas and templates. On 27 July, 2014 I recorded in my reflective journal:

I think the WAGOLL boards are there to show me how to teach maths and writing. They provide examples of what is expected from me in terms of children's work. I perceive them to be a scaffolding for myself as much as the children

There was only one unallocated display board. My predecessor advised that this board should be used to display children's project related work. On 26 July, 2014 I wrote in my reflective journal:

Not brave enough to contest the use of wall space which is presently mostly used to support maths and literacy. Eventually I would like to dedicate more space to the celebration of children's learning

In addition to the wall mounted display boards there were several free-standing

divider boards in the room which were used to separate tables and learners. These also displayed resources to support mathematics and English, for example, number lines and letter formation cards. My predecessor explained that the divider boards could be positioned to encourage particular children or groups of children (who were vulnerable to distractions) to focus on specific tasks. Also on 26 July, 2014 I wrote:

From my perspective the divider boards discourage peer to peer interaction and thus serve to control children's interactions. They reportedly work within the current system but they go against what I believe. I'm not brave enough to remove them yet

Control of time and space and the pressure to behave in ways that were sometimes contrary to my values led me to feel disempowered (Beauchamp and Thomas 2009). Feelings of disempowerment eroded my confidence and sense of agency. In my reflective journal on 28 September, 2014 I wrote:

Finding it hard to get to grips with the workings of Year One. Not sure that I have the right skills for the job or fit the Year One mold

and on 4 October, 2014:

Don't feel that I have much control over how things are done in Year One. Feel obliged to stick old ways of working in case my way fails

Loss of agency during transition caused me to interrogate my personal and professional identity, including my beliefs about teaching. The classroom cupboard became a metaphor for my loss of identity. In my journal on 15 June, 2015 I noted:

Nearly one year on and 'my' classroom cupboard still contains files and resources that belonged to my predecessors. It is stuffed with items that do not belong to me, but that I felt obliged to keep. I still feel like a lodger!

The cupboard felt like an impersonal shared space. Affordances associated with misplacement and control permeated from it. The left behind files and resources

represented old regimes of truth which controlled my Year One practice and determined my apprenticeship, thereby preventing me from developing my own identity. Negotiation between a teacher's personal and professional identity is a constant requirement in teaching (Beauchamp and Thomas 2009) and it was only after I had been resident in the classroom for over a year that I began to personalise this space and make it my own. Like the children who missed the Reception trays (see p.195), my feelings relating to personal space and ownership were compounded at the time of transition.

As another part of my induction into Year One my predecessors presented me with children's workbooks which displayed a considerable amount of written work. Within six weeks of commencing my new role I was invited to attend a writing moderation meeting. What Year One teachers needed to do to get the children ready for Year Two in terms of their writing was one of the issues discussed at the meeting. Following the meeting (on the 15 October, 2014) I recorded in my reflective journal:

Got a long list of things children must be able to do in their writing by the time they reach Year Two

The moderation meeting involved a group of about twenty teachers from a cluster of schools across our local area. With the exception of one newly qualified teacher and another teacher who had recently moved from Year Two, they were all experienced Year One teachers who I perceived to be extremely knowledgeable and confident in their role. Straight away, I felt disempowered by my lack of knowledge. I was also worried that I would not live up to the expectations of these experts. The pre-meeting brief instructed me to take along writing books belonging to five children who I believed to be working at 'age related expectations' (see glossary). I was not really sure what age-related expectations looked like. During the moderation, teachers scrutinised the books and made

judgements about the children's progress in writing. In my reflective journal on 15 October, 2014 I also wrote:

It concerns me to think that we are, so early on in the school year, judging children on the basis on formal writing opportunities

Most of the teachers presented formalised books which contained a significant amount of neat and meticulous writing. A procedural approach to writing was evident, with a considerable amount of scaffolding in the form of writing templates. There was an obvious lack of autonomy in the children's writing and little evidence of spontaneous, self-initiated writing or writing for pleasure. I quickly became conscious that my children's books fell short of what was expected. Discussions at the meeting revolved around strategies the teachers deployed to achieve the optimum progress in children's writing. These included formal handwriting lessons and focused teaching of SPAG (which I later found out to be an acronym for spelling, punctuation and grammar). One of the schools had even extended their school day by ten minutes in order to dedicate more time to writing. When I asked one of the experienced teachers how she managed to balance her commitment to writing with other subjects she reported:

We don't really. Maths and writing are our priority and there is not much time for anything else. We fit the rest in when we can

The discourse strongly supported the notion that writing was what counted in Year One above all other areas of learning. It was representative of what Singh (2014: 367) refers to 'pedagogic discourse'. That is:

The ensemble of power and control principles regulating or constraining what is selected as valid educational knowledge (curriculum), how it is taught/learnt and when learning has deemed to have happened (evaluation)

It opposed my perceptions of what mattered in the early years of children's education and went against the grain of my early years training and pedagogy. As an apprentice in the company of so many experienced Year One practitioners,

however, I felt powerless to stand up for what I believed and compelled to adopt the practice of others (Foucault, 1988). I resolved to prioritise writing in my own teaching so that I could endeavour to keep up with examples set by my peers and meet the expectations of school readiness (see p.52). Shortly after the meeting a learned colleague advised me:

‘We all know it’s not right, but you just have to play the game. It’s what matters in education and there’s no point in fighting it’

An average of six writing moderation meetings per year (at either county, cluster or federation level) followed my first moderation experience. The discourse at meetings continued to maintain the conception that writing was significantly more important than other areas of the curriculum. Propaganda that raised the profile of writing was not limited to Year One, however. It was embedded across the school and began in the early years. On 7 February 2015 I recorded in my reflective journal one of the many visits I had received throughout the year from Reception children who had been sent to show me their achievements in writing:

..... was sent to show me his writing again today. Of course, it is lovely to see but I wish the Reception adults would celebrate children’s efforts in other areas of their learning with the same enthusiasm

The visit concerned me on a number of levels. Firstly, such discourse presented me to the Reception children as an individual who valued literacy and numeracy above other skills. Secondly, it established Year One as an environment in which academic skills matter more than other areas of learning. Thirdly, it implied that other adults in the school also believed that these areas of learning were more important and should be promoted as such. The discourse produced knowledge which the adults as well as the children (for example Ben and Clare, p.198 and p.192) perceived as ‘truth’ (Foucault 1991). It also excluded and countered other versions of the truth. Early years practitioners, like myself, (for example) recognised the importance of holistic approaches to learning but this version of the truth is relatively uncelebrated. The regulative practices of our community

(for example, daily Maths and English lessons) kept these statements in circulation and excluded others (Foucault 1991). Hence, school discourse served to define and regulate what was normal in school. This accounted for the way in which Joshua's artistic talent was being veiled by the prioritisation of maths and literacy in our curriculum (see p.324). As a player within the education system I had to take some responsibility for keeping these statements of 'truth' in circulation.

Alongside the pressures of a curriculum heavily weighted towards writing, there were also other performativity measures (Bradbury 2013) to worry about which constrained, challenged and displaced my pedagogical values (Ball 2003). The Year One Phonics Screening Check (STA 2017), for example, exerts pressure on teachers to achieve sometimes unrealistic pass rate percentages. It forms part of the 'tyranny of numbers' that is present in all levels of teaching (Ball 2015). Performance related measures such as the Phonics Screening Check operate as a 'disciplinary technology' (Roberts-Holmes 2014: 304) which place pressures on teachers and children to effect rapid skills and knowledge acquisition. Such measures create a 'delivery chain' (Roberts-Holmes 2014: 313) and act as a 'meta-policy', 'steering' teachers' pedagogy 'from a distance' and narrowing the curriculum (Lingard, Martino and Rezai-Rashti 2013: 514). The Phonics Screening Check was yet another example of how the process of 'schoolification' (Moss 2012: 8) impacted on myself and the children. On the 14 June, 2014 I recorded in my reflective journal:

.....(my predecessor) told me not to worry too much about the Phonics Check.....as long as (I) achieved a pass rate percentage that matched or exceeded last year's Phonics Check results' there was 'nothing to worry about

My first experience of Phonics Screening Check in Year One highlighted an issue with the advice I had been given. Several of my able and fluent readers did not pass the test. My journal entry on 22 June, 2015 read:

Phonics test pass mark confirmed today. Very disappointing that,.....,..... and did not achieve the pass mark, especially as they are in my eyes competent readers. Percentage pass rate is down on last year – doesn't look good for my first year in Year One. More importantly, feeling like I have failed the children

By failing to recognise other ways of doing things (Moss 2010) the Phonics Screening Check had marginalised these children, whilst affording positive advantages (ibid) to children who favoured decoding as their preferred reading strategy. My response to the Phonics Screening Check exemplified the way in which policy reforms and performativity can result in unhelpful and damaging practices, which nonetheless satisfy performance requirements. Fear of the test had caused me to compromise my own professional judgement in the name of performativity resulting in, what Ball (2015) refers to as, 'values schizophrenia'. As a consequence, some of my more able readers had been disempowered of their reading competencies. The dilemma highlighted a rift between my own judgements about good practice and children's needs and the rigors of performance (Jeffrey and Woods, 1998). From Bernstein's perspective testing regimes disempower teachers (Bernstein 2001a). Rather than empowering me with skills that would enable me to teach reading more proficiently, the Phonics Screening Check had disempowered me by preventing me from teaching to the strengths of individual learners.

Being 'this other teacher' created costs to myself, set up personal and ontological dilemmas and called into question my identity (Ball 2015). The incident epitomised the way in which teachers' pedagogy has increasingly narrowed to ensure that children succeed in specific testing regimes which interpret literacy and numeracy in very particular ways (Roberts-Holmes 2014). It also exemplified the potential of educational systems to reduce the 'rich competent child' (and teacher) to a 'measurable teaching subject' (Ball and Olmedo 2013: 92) resulting

in a loss of identity for myself and the children. The test data left me feeling inadequate as a teacher and placed me in the 'must do better next year' category by my Head Teacher. In my reflective journal on 28 June, 2015 I noted:

The phonics results cause me to query my practice – Am I doing it right? Am I covering all that I am supposed to be covering? Am I doing as much or as well as my teaching colleagues? Should I be more structured in my approach? I'm not clear what the expectations are

Once again, I was experiencing the 'guilt in teaching' (Jeffrey and Woods 1998: 118). I attributed my ontological insecurity to just one of the myriads of judgements, measures, comparisons and targets to which all teachers are subjected (Ball 2010) – the Phonics Screening Check.

The pedagogic discourse I was absorbing suggested that scrutiny in Key Stage One focused acutely on hard evidence of children's progress in Maths and Literacy and, for the most part, excluded their progress in other areas of learning (for example, Personal, Social and Emotional development and the Foundation Subjects). This suggested that learning in Year One was likely to be equally confining. On 10 October, 2014 I wrote in my journal:

I am starting to realise the narrowness of a curriculum that is dominated by Maths and Literacy

My experiences helped to identify with any thoughts the children might have regarding the importance of certain subjects over others (see p.237). From the perspective of an infant school practitioner I recognised the importance of a holistic approach to learning which enabled children to experience a broad range of learning experiences and recognised children's individual strengths and interests. (This notion was particularly evident from the way in which Joshua used his art skills as a medium for communicating and supporting the novices (see p.324). The messages I was receiving from the performance driven context of the wider educational system, however, consistently fore fronted reading, writing and

mathematics at the expense of other subjects.

Coming from an early years background, I was aware of a disconnection between the short term effects of education (that are easily measurable) and the long term benefits of a holistic approach to education (Bryce-Clegg 2017). In my experience opportunities to engage in exciting and stimulating activities often led to better results, however, this was not always recognised because there is a discrepancy between some of the sound bites in *Excellence and Enjoyment* (DfES 2003) and the inspection process in England (Waite 2011).

Whilst the Early Years Foundation Stage (DfES 2007) is premised on a higher degree of choice for the teacher and child in how the curriculum is enacted (Waite 2011), teachers in Key Stage One and above are more constricted. Standards and practitioners' personal values compete in realising alternative pedagogies (Waite 2011). Teachers are frequently trapped between the perceived risks of resisting a system that is judged by narrow assessment criteria and 'an apparent warrant to embrace self-determination and develop new ways to enthuse learners' (Webb and Vuillamy 2007; Passy and Waite 2008).

The government's interventionist approach to education understandably makes teachers cautious (Alexander 2004). Within a climate where schools and teachers are judged on performance teachers naturally experience conflict in adopting creative approaches (Woods et al. 1997; Waite, Carrington and Passy 2005). This conflict intensifies after the early years foundation stage. Many of my teaching colleagues positioned themselves and their teaching within the comfort zone of what could sometimes be perceived as an unimaginative and uninspiring curriculum rather than face the consequences of non-compliance.

As a creative individual who very much enjoys teaching the arts I could relate to Polly, Jenny and Clare's preoccupation with the creative area (see p.219). Just

like these creative members of my class, I found that the Year One curriculum neglected this area of learning in favour of other 'more important' subjects. When I was afforded the opportunity to teach art in Year One my natural creativity was limited by the prescribed framework of the National Curriculum. Rather than numbing my enthusiasm for the arts, this left me craving creative activities even more. I was always on the look-out for opportunities that would enable me to 'legitimately' weave them into the curriculum.

Clare's realisation that 'making' was not so important in Year One (see p.219) resonated with my own realisation that, although creative aspects of the curriculum were important to me, there was little time for them in Year One and when they did appear it was usually within a controlled context. On 16 November 2014 I wrote:

Would love to devote more classroom time to the arts, especially as the children really seem to enjoy creative activities. Sadly, there's never enough time because there is so much to cover in Maths and Literacy. If only there were more hours in the day or fewer learning objectives!

I was fully aware that the children were motivated by creative pursuits and that motivation raises standards. From my novice positioning, however, I was particularly susceptible to the array of educational reforms led by political and commercial interests which misunderstand how children learn and the deadening effects of testing and standardisation (Robinson 2015: 24). I was concerned that the 'standards movement' which promotes productivity over creativity (Ball 2013: 91) was depressing my creativity and innovation (Robinson 2015: 24) and that I was (in turn) deterring the children's creativity. Also, on the 16 November, 2014 I noted:

I worry that the emphasis on academic work results in a failure to recognise children's diverse talents and prepare them for future life

Analysis of my reflections about creativity in Year One developed my

understanding of why the Year One curriculum projects were so important to the children (see p.227) and caused me to consider their importance to me as the teacher I wanted to be. On 1 December, 2014 I commented in my journal:

The projects are such a welcome relief. They really bring out the best in my teaching and in the children's learning. I am enjoying them as much as the children

What made the projects successful was that they enabled a more holistic approach to the curriculum that nurtured the children's diverse talents and presented a more balanced, individualised and creative approach to education. The projects legitimised learning beyond reading, writing and maths. They presented opportunities for the children and me to explore talents and interests which were otherwise systematically marginalised in the preoccupation with particular subjects and types of ability (Robinson 2015). The flexible perimeters of the projects meant they could be adapted to meet the interests, skills and needs of the children and myself. Allowing children to lead the projects permitted a more personal pedagogical approach that was more aligned to early years practice. This created a Year One environment that supported a more fluid transition from Reception. Autonomy of choice in the projects resulted in enjoyment, which in turn contributed to improved learning and application of that learning. On 24 January, 2015 I recorded in my journal:

I am amazed at how much the children have learnt and remembered already in this project (The Queen's Portrait). Several parents tell me they have been wowing them with their knowledge at home

My reflections affirmed the fact that children are far more likely to retain what they wish to learn and enjoy learning than what they have no choice about (Erk et al. 2003). Although I continued to worry that within the 'they must be ready for Year Two discourse' the Year Two teacher would not value the skills I had taught the children via the projects, I increasingly found the projects empowering. They enabled me to manage the curriculum within the restrictions that were placed

upon me, providing a more balanced teaching context where I could negotiate my sense of the teacher I wanted to be with the reforms and contexts that influenced my practice (Brooks 2016). The projects permitted me to work with autonomy, to develop my own identity in Year One and to teach in a way that was compatible to my ontological beliefs. I was able to move beyond teaching as a technical or mechanical act by integrating 'self' into each project (Berci 2006). This in turn enriched the children's learning experiences.

A phase of new and intense learning continued throughout my first year in Year One. As an apprentice (Lave and Wenger 1991; Handley, Sturdy, Fincham and Clark 2006), I assumed a position of legitimate peripheral participation (Lave and Wenger 1991) from which I observed and learnt from the established practice of the experts. Throughout my apprenticeship my less powerful positioning led me to follow established Year One practices with a similar compliance to that of the children. Within this phase of 'Hegemony' I occupied a state within society whereby those who are dominated by others take on board the values and ideologies of those in power and accept them as their own (Foucault 1980b). Like the children, I was reliant on more experienced others to teach me what I needed to know. This positioned me as a less powerful member of the community. I inferred that accreditation of my performance in Year One relied heavily upon my ability to conform to existing guidelines, hence, I continued the current practice and, in doing so, served to maintain the discourse of Year One.

Prioritisation of maths and literacy in the environment and the affordances of the classroom dictated what kind of teacher I should be and how I should teach. From my novice positioning they served to control my practice. In this context my ability to choose what and how I taught the children in my class was severely restricted and I inevitably passed on the lack of choice afforded to me to the children. Strict

control of the teacher, therefore, led to the teacher's strict control over the children.

Just like Ben (see p.198), however, I gradually 'got used' to the workings of Year One and began to relax in the role and enjoy (rather than worry about) the work I was doing. As my knowledge and understanding of Year One practice, the children and the curriculum developed so did my confidence and self-belief. I moved from a position of legitimate peripheral participation (Lave and Wenger 1991) to full participation. From this position of increased empowerment I felt more able to negotiate, challenge and rework existing practice. Being up against policy enabled me to think critically about current practice and policies.

Having established a track record of successful performance in Year One by practicing within the rules that were passed on to me I could, like Polly (see p.219) and others begin to adapt the rules to match my pedagogical positioning. As I developed into an expert I began to cast off or reject this framework and developed my own way of doing things. I started to implement my own ideas, beliefs and practices based on newly acquired knowledge and previous knowledge and experience.

As I journeyed from novice to expert it became increasingly more acceptable for me to work creatively. I began to contribute my own perspectives based, in part, on my early years experience. Similar to Polly (p.219), I developed my own identity and practice (Wenger 1998). I became skillful in adapting my practice to encompass more balanced learning experiences for the children.

Recognition of the positive effect my work was having on the children's holistic learning empowered me to be more creative in my approach to the Year One curriculum. I was able to recognise ways in which I could incorporate creative opportunities which, rather than operating at odds with what were considered to

be the more important aspects of the curriculum, complemented and enhanced them. For example, what better way to develop creative language and storytelling than to create a model of a magical land that could be used in adventure role play? With this increased sense of agency, I was also gradually able to influence and reshape some of the practices in the Year One community (Dunlop 2003). Similar to Polly, my developing confidence and experience of Year One empowered me to become more adept to negotiating the Year curriculum in a manner that suited my creative interests. I felt more empowered to defend marginalised areas of the curriculum and to initiate discussions with my peers and superiors about how we could raise standards through a more integrated approach.

Creativity is, after all, merely the most elegant of response possible to the limitations placed upon you (Beadle 2017: 174)

Three years down the line and still practising in Year One, I regularly received visits from new or struggling teachers from across the county who (by referral) came to observe 'how we do it' in my Year One. I was also urged by my superiors to write a practical book for other practitioners about 'How to Do Year One'. Increasingly I was asked to disseminate my practice to others. Over time, therefore, my contributions led to a gradual reshaping of the wider Year One community (Handley et al. 2006; Bronfenbrenner and Morris 1998; Pianta et al. 1999). Thus, I too began to experience the empowering effects of knowledge (see p.198).

On 8 February 2018, my Executive Head teacher asked me to 'present to two leadership groups on our curriculum approach', commenting that I had:

successfully built on what we know about excellent EY practice-strong 'in the head' knowledge of where children are and what they need to learn/ ability to be flexible in content building on children's interest(and) it is so exciting to see someone totally understanding our curriculum approach!

I was reassured by a local commitment to a Year One curriculum which built on early years pedagogy and empowered by the recognition of my expertise and contribution to children's learning. Mentoring other teachers in this way established a new power network. In my reflective journal on the same day I wrote:

Very excited. I have an opportunity to convince others that it is possible to develop Year One practice that supports, rather than negates, the transition from Reception

My journey ran in parallel to Hope's (see p.248). As a novice Year One teacher, I had very little confidence in my ability to disseminate Year One practice to others. With three years' experience of Year One behind me, however, I was confident in my ability to inform others and frequently took up invitations to disseminate my good practice. My confidence in my role as expert was further supported by the knowledge I had accumulated during the course of my research and also through the learning conversations I had shared with my supervisors and colleagues.

Knowledge is empowering (Foucault 1979). It was much easier to deliver a self-assured presentation to an audience when you had a comprehensive knowledge of the topic and had talked about it with others. My feelings about knowledge dissemination and teaching resonated with the children's responses to the Year One projects (see p.230). I was able to teach skills and concepts for which I understood the clear purpose with far more passion and commitment than those for which I saw less purpose, resulting in a more engaging and successful learning experience for the children to whom I was imparting the knowledge.

In reality, however, I questioned how much difference I would be able to make. I strongly believed that my approach impacted positively on children's progress across the curriculum. Given that the performance of teachers, head teachers, schools and local education authorities continued to be judged upon the number of children who reached or exceeded age related expectations in reading, writing

and maths it would be difficult to convince other professionals to adopt an approach that stepped outside of traditional Year One pedagogy.

During my third year of teaching, an upper management commitment to ensuring that a greater proportion of children exceeded age related expectations further intensified the performativity measures on the children and teachers. My knowledge of Year One children, EYFS pedagogy and the Key Stage one curriculum empowered me to make changes, but I (and others like me) continued to be disempowered by the controls imposed upon me by the wider education system. My journal entry on 10 February, 2018 which read:

I have the tools to present a good argument in favour of a new approach to the Year One curriculum. A sound knowledge of the supporting theories and practice examples empowers me for the challenge

suggested that the power chain had moved through me to produce a different way of responding to challenges.

Via an 'unpredictable power knowledge relay' (Jackson and Mazzei 2014: 61) I had developed more confident ways of dealing with the discourses of Year One. I may not ever completely escape the power relations that produce me as 'not good enough'; yet as a vehicle of power, my own responsive practices of power/knowledge produced different conditions that allowed more freedom and made room for new ways of interacting with the discourses of Year One. As I struggled with and against power, however, I remained aware that I was also keeping it on the move (Foucault 1980).

7.2.1 Researcher Reflections Summary

My journey of transition alongside the children sensitised me to the issues concerned and enabled deeper analysis of the findings. my reflective journal

provided a means for insightful self-discovery and a tool for personal and professional growth' (Hoff, 2002, p. xii). Writing entries in my journal allowed me to reflect on my teaching practice and, in particular my experiences of transition to Year One (Brookefield, 1995). With the aid of my reflective journal I was able to reflect and relate these to what the children were saying. I also found journaling to be a good site of entry for problem solving (Ochs, Smith, and Taylor, 1996).

Like the children my positioning changed in relation to others as I moved within and between the microsystems of school. Operating within a range of conflicting subjects and positions, I transformed myself in relation to others and created new knowledge via the power relations and practices of Year One (Jackson and Mazzei 2012). I developed a range of responsive strategies to the power/knowledge practices that attempted to constrain me as a 'split subject' (Jackson and Mazzei 2014: 65). Ultimately, however, my performance as a Year One teacher was still measured in relation to my children's progress in reading, writing and maths and it was these statistics that were valued by my Head Teacher, School Governors, Local Education Authority and the Government. Similar to the positioning of the children, therefore, complete empowerment remained an unachievable goal.

I was reminded that every individual operates within systems or layers of varying power and control and that their positioning and role within specific micro-contexts and wider contexts is variable. I was ever mindful of my own positioning as a player within the complex system of power relationships that operated in my school and the wider educational system. Hence, my sense of agency and 'voice' was constantly constrained by the hierarchical system in which I worked, thus preventing me from practicing in a way which was fully compatible to my epistemological stance. The challenge was to achieve a balance between the expectations of my organisation and my commitment to 'student voice'.

Summary of the Findings and Analysis (Chapters Five, Six and Seven)

The findings revealed the children's in-depth knowledge and understanding of Year One discourse and practice. They also showed which aspects of Year One mattered most to the children, for example, the difference between the play-based learning the children had experienced in Reception and the more formal learning that the children were experiencing in Year One. Discourse and knowledge of the next stage of learning played a key role in how the children approached transition. Their knowledge was shaped by present discourse and constructed from first-hand experiences. This demonstrated the importance of links between communities and the key role brokers played in transition.

The findings indicated that children's time and space were increasingly being controlled as they moved from Reception into Year One. This defined their experience of education in 'relatively narrow and instrumental terms' and constructed them in particular ways relative to adults (Devine, 2002). Mechanisms of control included adult generated rules, routines and rituals as well as timetables and the physical layout of the classroom. These control mechanisms limited children's choice and were thus disempowering.

The children also revealed that Year One discourse and practice controlled and limited the breadth of their learning. Written communication and mathematical skills were valorised, which had the impact of undervaluing other forms of communication, other learning and other talents. This was particularly apparent from the resources they made to support the novices, many of which focused on the Literacy and Maths. This implied that children's learning experiences and opportunities for development were being inadvertently skewed by contemporary policies relating to the curriculum focus and by pedagogic practices driven by an accountability and performativity agenda. Such discourses had implications for the children's 'sense of connectedness to their learning experiences as well as their sense of themselves as individuals with a particular status and position within the school (Devine, 2002, p.309). This, in turn, began to shape the children's perceptions of what kind of learning/subjects were more valued in adult life and those which were less valued.

The teacher's power to influence the time, space and learning patterns of the children appeared to be an authoritative resource which facilitated their surveillance and control (Giddens 1987, Devine 1998). This automatically positioned the teachers as more powerful in relation to the children. The findings, however, also showed that when the children were given opportunities to use their knowledge and expertise in self-chosen ways, they could participate successfully in research and use their experiences to support others. This changed their positioning within the process of transition to one of greater empowerment. The sensitive transfer of knowledge between expert and novice children prepared the novices for the next stage of learning in ways that are meaningful to them and enabled both expert and novice children to take back some control of the transition process. In addition, the findings indicated that (although Year One discourse can prioritise and silence different types of learning) children recognise limitations and can effectively negotiate the new maze and find their own routes through. They can also help others to do so. There was, for example, evidence that the children were beginning to use their in-depth knowledge of Year One systems and practice to predict and overcome barriers that were important to them. The findings showed that children were using their knowledge and expertise to negotiate and make personalised changes to the existing Year One practices. The children's desire to show off their skills in their preferred areas of learning also changed the discourse that prioritised certain subjects and silenced others.

The findings from discussions with the junior school children repeated many of the themes identified in the main study, thus highlighting threads across transitions that were not exclusively to do with specific shifts from the Foundation Stage to Year One. This had implications for school wide transitions. The junior school children demonstrated their ability to reflect deeply on their experiences, identify important issues relating to transition and articulate their perspectives clearly. They were able to apply their experiences in the pilot study to future transitions, enabling them to make sense of their experiences and providing them with a bank of knowledge and skills which they could use to help themselves and others as they transited from one stage of education to the next. This suggested a longevity to the

transition project's effects.

My reflective journal entries revealed similarities between my own experiences of transition and those of the children. Considering these parallels in light of the insights and understandings of professional knowledge gained from my engagement with literature, enabled me to make sense of what the children were saying and also to make sense of my own experiences, feelings and reflections (Schon 1983). This helped me to establish meaningful links between my knowledge base (the literature) and Year One practice (Thompson and Thompson 2008).

Chapter 8. Conclusion

This study contributes to research, in terms of both methodology and theory, each of which is influenced by the other. The theoretical contribution is based on findings, which were made possible through the innovative use of methodology. Methodologically, this study moves beyond listening to and respecting children's expertise in their own lives. The deep extended participation of the children (with me) in this research enabled them to shape the experiences of other children through their metacognitive reflections on their transitions, facilitated and expressed through their chosen methods.

Use of this methodological approach adds to our theoretical understanding of transition and to the existing body of knowledge relating to early years transition through a more nuanced understanding of power and control and the fluid nature of children's positioning in transition. When children are given opportunities to use their knowledge and expertise to support others in self-chosen ways, their positioning within the process of transition changes to one of greater empowerment. Children's sophisticated awareness of and responses to power and control relationships during transition become evident. The 'sensitive transfer' of knowledge between expert and novice children prepare children for the next stage of learning in ways that are meaningful to them, thus empowering both the expert and the novice for future transitions.

In demonstrating these findings, I have answered the following research aim, objectives and questions.

Aim:

To critically analyse young children's perspectives of transition from the Reception to Year One within the context of power/knowledge relationships
(Research Question a and b)

Objectives:

1. To critically analyse how children's experiences can be used to support new groups of children moving into Year One *(Research Question c and d)*
2. To use considerations of power and knowledge to analyse the theoretical and methodological links between children's participation in research, children's voice and children's perceptions of themselves as experts *(Research Questions b, d and e)*
3. To develop a framework for the participation of 'expert' children in Year One in researching and disseminating ways to support young children facing transition *(Research Question c and d)*

Questions:

- a. How do children recently transitioned to Year One perceive the ways in which power and knowledge relationships are constructed through the discourse and practices of Year One?
- b. How do the children transform themselves in relation to others through the knowledge produced within power relations, discourse and practices at the time of transition?
- c. How can those who have recently been involved in the transition from Reception to Year One use their recent experience of transition to help

- to bridge the gap for the next cohort of children?
- d. How can knowledge of the structure of the next stage of learning be used as a tool with which to begin to readdress power imbalances during transition?
 - e. How does encouraging Year One children to use their expertise to help others impact on the experts?

This chapter is divided into ten sections, each of which address and are cross-referenced to specific research questions. I begin the chapter with my conclusions relating to the research methodology which facilitated children's voice and their deep participation in the research (*Powerful 'Listening'*). I then draw attention to the theoretical understandings about early years transition that arose from the research (*Building on existing theory and knowledge*). In the next section (*Making Transitions Visible*) I make conclusions about how the children's involvement in the research prepared them for future transitions. I then make reference to the changes that occurred in our school as a result of the research (*Empowering Change*). In the following two sections (*Community action* and *Becoming an expert*) I discuss how the children worked together as a community and developed their expert role. After that I outline what I learnt from the research. In the section *Beyond the research intentions* I highlight the implications of the research and how it impacted on wider teaching and learning in our local area. I discuss the strengths and limitations of the research approach before concluding the chapter with my recommendations based on the research findings.

8.1 Powerful 'Listening' (The Methodology) (Research Question a, b, c)

The innovative methodology used in this study produced rich findings which led to

its theoretical contribution. In this study visual, spatial and physical tools were not seen as a 'creative extra' but were offered as a challenge to the dominant learning modes that value verbal/linguistic skills at the expense of other means of communication. Methods that respected children's competencies were used extensively in this research to enable them to reflect on, express and use their multiple expert experiences for the purpose of helping other children who were new to the situation.

Situated within an ethos which enables children to challenge thinking and to have opinions that differ from adults, the children in this research were treated as equal partners. They chose how they participated and took ownership of the study, actively participating in multiple stages of the research process. Within a context of continuous dialogue, the children used their preferred modes of communication and chose to demonstrate their perspectives through verbal and non-verbal forms of communication. This promoted discourse and facilitated their voice in a creative and flexible way.

Many of the children chose to use skills and techniques which they had already practised (see p.204). This gave them confidence and established them as experts from the onset, thereby minimising feelings of disempowerment which novices in research sometimes experience and empowering them as skilful communicators. The children chose their own research instruments and developed their own roles and responsibilities in supporting transition for the newcomers. Over a period of time, they suggested methods which shaped the methodology. They took the lead in deciding what the novices needed to know about Year One, what resources would best support them and how they would disseminate their knowledge. This consciously influenced the direction of the study.

The children's contribution to this study developed the participatory nature of the research further than a level of participation via user-friendly research tools.

Through their deep extended participation the children showed that they had the capacity and maturity to participate meaningfully in the research, interpreting and influencing the interactions that occurred. This implies that age need not be a barrier to research participation.

The children's positioning was moved beyond simply taking part in the research to a position of knowing that their perspectives and actions were, not only being listened to, but also acted upon. They were able to influence the experiences of other children directly and observe first-hand the impact of their participation in the research. They saw that their resources and participation in the research were being used and making a difference to transition, both in terms of supporting the newcomers and in initiating changes to Year One practice. The children's understanding of their world and sub-cultures resulted in rich insights which ultimately improved outcomes for the next cohort. This validated their expertise and their role in the research.

8.2 Building on existing theory and knowledge (Research Question b, d, e)

The methodological approach used in this research augments theoretical understandings of transition and furthers existing knowledge with regard to early years transition. In this research individual children experienced empowerment or disempowerment (Foucault 1980, Giddens 1984, Devine 1998) (see p.126 and p.105) and knowledge was shown to act as a mediator to increase their feelings of empowerment or reduce disempowerment (see p.106 and 204).

The way in which the children negotiated the transition from Reception to Year One in this study challenged traditional assumptions of children's positioning (see p243). It exemplified how tensions within relationships of power can produce new power relations and keep power on the move. The research opened the field of possibilities enabling the participants to react to each other in various ways

leading to various points of instability including resistances.

Within the constant tension of power relations, children attempted to readdress the balance of power by negotiating existing Year One practice. When they struggled against power they were able to overturn it and manipulate it to their advantage. Enabling the children to use their experiences and knowledge to support others in self-chosen ways strengthened their positioning as vehicles of power in the community. Building on Devine's model of adult/child relations in school, this positioned the children as central to the circulation of power during transition.

Through the knowledge produced within the power relations and practices of Year One, the children were able to transform themselves in relation to others. Deep extended participation in the research enabled them to internalise, challenge and reject the existing practices of the community and thus develop their own identity and practice which they passed onto others in a critically responsive way (see p.243). They began to resist, transform and adapt the existing control methods and discourse and in doing so they were able to influence the structure of transition, take back some control and move the Year One and transition practice forward. This intercepted the cycle of institutionalised practice which was responsible for maintaining the status quo and prevented some tired practice and discourse from being reprocessed, hence transforming the Year One transition experiences of the next cohort of children.

The findings imply a model that represents the transition from Reception to Year One as a spiral of transitional of development leading to change, rather than a cycle (figure 7.1). This model does not lead to formulaic practice. It is sensitive to

each cohort of children, each situation and the discourses of power that operate within each context. The model is key to understanding, not only how transition was approached in this research, but also the nature of the children's participation in the research.

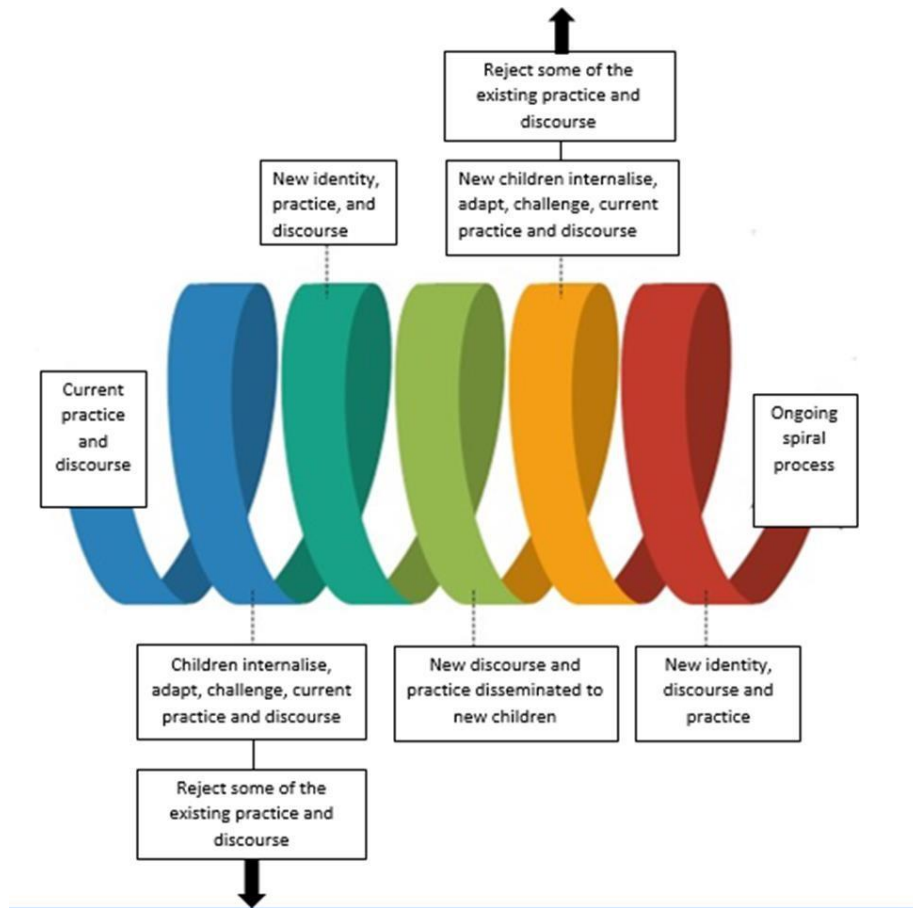


Figure 7.1 *Spiral of Transitional Development Model*

Throughout the research children demonstrated an astuteness to the workings of power and a developed sense of hierarchy within the education system. The research enabled them to challenge and critique the workings of power and control. They used their preferred modes of communication to demonstrate their

perceptions of power and control relationships during transition and they were able to respond to these in a variety of insightful and imaginative ways (see p.126). This was particularly evident from the way in which the children so effectively negotiated the maze of Year One, found their own routes through and helped others to do so.

Recent, relevant, first-hand experience of transition empowered the children with in depth knowledge and positioned them as experts. The process of metacognitive reflection on their transition enabled them to select (and focus on) those aspects of transition that were meaningful to them and were likely to be meaningful to other young children. Choosing their own means of dissemination (for example their resources) allowed the expert children to transfer the knowledge that they considered to be important in a way that was accessible and engaging to the novice children. This sensitively prepared the novices for the next stage of learning without overwhelming them with too much information. Hence, children who had been influenced by classroom relationships, curriculum and pedagogy were, through their involvement in the research, able to influence it.

The experience led to greater empowerment for both the expert and the novice children during transition. The expert children were moved to a position of greater empowerment because they were able to challenge the existing discourse by choosing what knowledge they passed on and how. These children became effective brokers in transition and led the novices to a position of greater empowerment by providing them with knowledge of the next stage of learning that was relevant to their needs. Participation in the research also led both expert and novice children towards a position of greater empowerment for future transitions.

8.3 Making transition processes visible: Preparing children for future transitions (Research Questions c, d)

The research provided both novice and expert children with the time and opportunities to think deeply about their experiences of transition and to discuss their thoughts and feelings with others who had (or were about to) find themselves in a similar position. This metacognitive process made transition in our school more visible and developed the children's capacity to articulate their reactions to transition.

The children developed an awareness of transition processes, as well as the emotional feelings which accompany transition. As they moved through the school and on to junior school they were able to transit better because they were familiar with the processes of transition and had been involved in the metacognitive process of discussing it (see p.164). They became attuned to difference as part of the normal cycle of transition and they were able to rationalise transition as a period of adjustment and a temporary state. This led them to recognise power and knowledge differentials at the time of transition as also being temporary.

The children developed a range of support mechanisms and strategies to draw upon during transition periods. This 'toolkit' prepared them for future transitions and contributed to their resilience during times of change. In addition, adults across the school became aware of transition from the children's perspective.

During this research the children reflected on their experiences and applied them to helping others. Recent first-hand experience gave the experts special insider knowledge that could not be replicated by any other adults or peers. This made them natural brokers in the community. Guidance and advice from the experts

provided the novices with a formula by which to engage in the practices of the community and prepared them for future involvement in similar experiences.

The experts' transition toolkit was more relevant to the needs and interests of the novices than any adults could supply. It transformed the abstract concept of transition into a practical form which led to a more fluid transition for the novices. The experience of helping others bestowed the experts with the knowledge and confidence to address their own future transitional problems. Prior knowledge and experience of transition reassured the experts that everything was likely to be alright and gave them strategies to deal with it if it was not.

The children became more critically responsive to the discourse that was disseminated to them (see p.164). They could critique existing transition arrangements, identify potential problems and come up with solutions (see p.172). Hence they began to see beyond their initial feelings of fear and disorientation, viewing transition as a challenge and motivation rather than an obstacle.

8.4 Empowering change

This study exposes transition as a positive, necessary and powerful process. It reinforces the role transition plays in moving learning forward and preventing a stale and static learning environment. During this study the diverse learning experiences of community members impacted on, and shaped, the community and transition was seen as both a contributor and a filter. As newcomers to Year One, the children (and I) experienced change. We had to learn a new set of practices but we also brought with us new knowledge, experiences and ideas that

were based on our experiences in Reception and other communities. These experiences contributed to and developed the practice, learning and what was accepted as 'truth' in Year One and ultimately brought about change which reshaped Year One. This highlighted transition as a dynamic context for learning and reinforced the important contribution novices make to their new learning environment.

The research fore-grounded children's perspectives of transition and highlighted issues that mattered most to them. It also made visible aspects of practice and discourse which acted as barriers to their smooth transition. This led to deep critical reflection by adults and opened up dialogue between practitioners, which in turn began to initiate changes in discourse and practice. The adults were moved to a position of greater empowerment through the knowledge gained of transition from the children's perspectives. They began to think about the present discourse and practice and how this could be developed, hence they were able to make practical changes that mattered to the children.

Modalities of control (Bernstein 1979) in Year One during the research shifted away from stratified towards differentiated. Relationships in the research were more personalised (rather than hierarchical). Children organised themselves into unfixed working groups of mixed ability and gender. The roles of adults and children were more ambiguous and negotiated rather than given and boundaries between adults and children were blurred. Adults began to recognise that all children had the potential to become experts if their competencies were encouraged and enabled. This resulted in a more nuanced approach to teaching and learning with adults looking for ways to facilitate diversity in the classroom.

Rules and rituals that had been imposed by those in power and were not representative of the community were interrogated by the experts and new rules and rituals were developed (see p.230 and p.232). Child-led reshaping of the rules

and rituals relating to transition in the research facilitated children's involvement in negotiation and dialogue relating to the broader rules and rituals practiced in Year One. This provided opportunities for differentiated modalities of control which had the potential to replace domination with participation (see p.234).

In this research a period of transition and reflection on transition led to new interpretations of established practice. The children revealed that the current valorising of written communication and mathematical skills in Year One had the impact of undervaluing other forms of communication, other learning and other talents. This implied that children's learning experiences and opportunities for development were being inadvertently skewed by contemporary policies relating to the curriculum focus and by pedagogic practices driven by an accountability and performativity agenda.

One of the most exciting developments that occurred as result of the research was a shift in the way in which adults across the school viewed children's learning in areas of the curriculum that had beforehand been marginalised. The research approach generated a wide range of individual responses. The experts demonstrated an array of skills and competencies through their resources and chosen forms of communication. Throughout the research they were celebrated for using skills and competencies that were compatible with them, thus showing that these skills were recognised and important. This changed the discourse surrounding Year One, which often silenced and negated children's other expertise, for the novices and led to children and adults realising that Year One valued more than just reading, writing and maths (see p.360). Year One practitioners began to develop a more flexible and creative approach to the curriculum that recognised children's individual skills and interests and Reception practitioners began to talk about and celebrate the novices' multiple competencies and achievements in the context of transition. Practitioners across the school became more aware of the limitations of making judgements on

children's ability based on their writing.

The research underlined the impact of the school's project approach to teaching and learning (see p.333). Projects were important to the children because they celebrated diverse talents and fore-fronted otherwise side-lined aspects of the curriculum. The children's deep engagement in the transition project highlighted the significance of relevant and purposeful hooks to draw the children into projects. In the past project hooks had sometimes involved fictional scenarios (such as a letter from fantasy 'forest folk'). Exciting as these hooks may have seemed at the time to the teachers, they were disconnected to reality and irrelevant to the children's context. In this research the children showed that they were engaged and motivated by real life situations which required purposeful problem solving for an authentic and believable cause. The children demonstrated their ability to influence the course of the projects and shape the project outcomes. This negated discourse relating to control and organisation of children's time and space and impacted on their sense of identity, position, status and connectedness to their learning experiences. It also challenged practitioners across the school to hand back control of the projects to the children and to reflect upon children's participation in projects and how their role could be developed in the future.

Transition 'events', such as 'Move Up Day' (when children spend a day in the classroom they will shortly be transiting to with their new teacher), do not generally show children the below surface facets of transition. The research highlighted the need for a more personalised approach to transition that empowers new children with relevant knowledge of the next stage of learning and provides them with models of how to do things. The research fore-fronts a creative approach to transition that supports children's emotional well-being and social skills, whilst giving them a sense of agency and voice. Through their participation in this research the children developed an approach which

subsequently provided a framework for the participation of 'expert' children in Year One in researching and disseminating ways to support young children facing transition. This approach has become a key component of the school's ongoing transition programme.

The framework ([figure 7.2](#)) builds on the *Spiral of Transitional Development* model ([figure 7.1](#)). During their first months in Year One children develop their knowledge and understanding of current Year One discourse and practice by immersing themselves in the community. After this period of apprenticeship, children begin to reflect deeply on their experiences of transition and share their perspectives. Via a project based introduction to an ongoing problem, the children are challenged to use their experiences to help the next cohort of children. Children share their ideas and plan how they will support the next cohort. They develop resources to support novice children. Adults facilitate the children's role in supporting the newcomers. Children present their 'toolkits' to the new cohort.

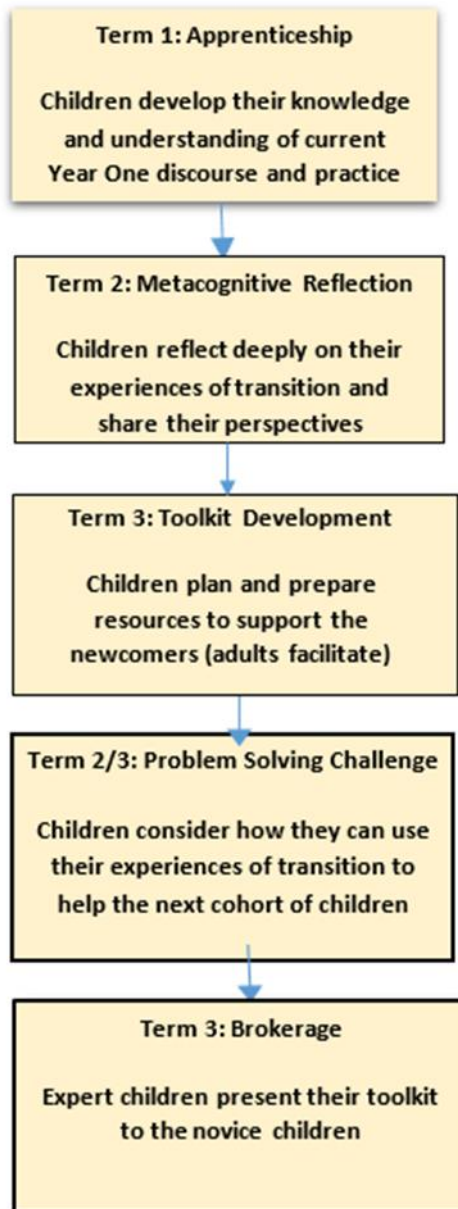


Figure 7.2 Framework for the participation of 'expert' children

Alongside broader changes to discourse and practice smaller, but nonetheless significant, practical changes began to happen in the classroom as a direct consequence of the children's input. The children took control of completely

revamping the writing area and stocked it with interesting writing tools and materials from their wish list (including *Angry Bird* pens). Following consultation with the children the building and construction toys were relocated to an area that afforded builders more space and raised the profile of their models. The children took ownership of more of the classroom display boards, deciding what aspect of learning they should celebrate and how. This resulted in a more balanced celebration of children's skills and talents which illustrated children's achievements across the curriculum, rather than narrowly focusing on writing and maths as had previously been the case.

Tangible changes to classroom practice were accompanied by a developing transition in the school's ethos relating to children's participation and children's voice. Adults began to critique their current practice with regard to children's participation and look for opportunities to legitimately involve children in authentic projects that would enable them to participate. Adults also began to reflect critically on their role in the process of representing children's voices. The school began to think about how they could change their approach to practitioner research from research 'on children' to research 'with children', thus placing children as central and encouraging a more agentic view of children's research participation which would in turn facilitate more authentic student voice methodologies.

8.5 Community action

A powerful sense of community action was developed through this research. As their communities of practice diverged children and adults became united in a common cause and worked together towards a shared goal. Involvement in the project was exciting. It gave the children and adults a strong feeling of being engaged in something special. Alongside a community of Year One experts, a

community of dedicated researchers formed. The children saw a clear purpose for their involvement in the research and, coupled with a desire to help others, this resulted in community positivity and cohesion. They were proud to belong to the community and to be making a difference. This was highly motivating. They shared ideas, supported each other in specific research roles and worked together collaboratively to move the project forward. The research community that was created had a common and clear domain of interest. Members of the community were 'committed to the domain'. They developed a practice where members worked together to develop a collection of resources and ways of addressing recurring problems.

Helping the novices became a significant part of classroom and playground discourse. The expert children were more sensitive to the needs of the novices and actively supported them in a variety of different ways and contexts as part of everyday school life. This led to the formation of meaningful relationships between experts and novices, which in turn supported the transition process for the new children. Adults and children also unified. Relationships between adults and children were firmly grounded in knowledge and experience rather age-related hierarchy. Adult recognition of the integral part children's knowledge and experience played in the success of project resulted in a realignment of power differentials as adults and children formed equal partnerships within the community. The longevity of bonds formed between experts, expert and novice children, and child and adult researchers transcended the study (see p.164). The underpinning relationships that developed between experts and novices and adults and children had wider implications of listening to children.

8.6 Becoming an expert

In this research the children's position, role and status was redefined reframing

their perception of themselves as active participants with the right to be heard and enabling them to construct identities for themselves within the context of school. Giving the less powerful a voice in transition and research was one of the multi-directional benefits of brokerage in the research. Children do not always consider themselves to be experts (especially in research or at a time of transition). Participation in this research, however, developed the children's perceptions of themselves as experts. The combination of helping the novices and active participation in the research was empowering. The research methodology enabled the children to behave like experts and learn expert skills (see Ben p.221, Joshua p267). There were opportunities for them to think, puzzle and work things out. They were able to work creatively and independently of adult support. They were consulted and celebrated as experts. This developed their self-confidence and self-belief.

Alongside recognition of their expertise from adult research partners, a key contributor to the children's confidence in their own expertise was the opportunities the methodology afforded children to work within their own comfort zone of skills set, strengths and competencies. Children who were experiencing the shifting balance of power as their official and local knowledge of Year One developed were able to succeed as mentors because they were using the right tools for the job. They were also able to succeed as effective communicators and presenters.

The peer to peer research broke down inter-generational barriers and ensured access to sub- cultures. Shared understandings between experts and novices earned confidence, led to more meaningful discussions and helped the novices learn the practices that mattered in the community. The experts were more successful in obtaining responses from the novices than adults because power and generational issues with peer relationships are generally less intense as those related to adult children relationships. The findings were more authentic because

they were based on children's experiences and perspectives, rather than adult interpretations of children's perspectives. The expert children knew they were instrumental in narrowing the gap for the novices. They knew they were experts because their perspectives were valued, listened to and acted upon.

The experience of participating as active researchers was an empowering process which led to a virtuous circle of increased confidence and raised self-esteem resulting in more active participation by the children in other aspects affecting their lives. Giving the children a voice in the research process further empowered them in the community. Their growing competence as participant researchers added to their perception of themselves as experts. It also encouraged other communities to perceive the children as competent experts.

Some commentators and theorists dispute the notion that it is possible to 'give children a voice' (Wolk, 1998 and others). During the research process, however, the children had participated in group activities and discussions; helped each other and shared information. In order to address a shared concern, they had worked together to develop a shared collection of resources and ways of addressing recurring problems (Wenger, 1998). Through the process of 'reification' (Barton and Hamilton, 2005), they had transformed their abstract thoughts and feelings on transition into a 'congealed' form, thereby providing the novices with a formula by which to engage with the practices of the Year One community (Wenger, 1998). This had led to relationship building within the research team and across year groups. I felt that, whilst some of the old practice had been inevitably recycled within this process, the experts had also contributed to the development of new practices which would ultimately move Year One practice forward. In doing so they had created their own researcher's community of practice (Wenger, 1998).

Active participation in the research empowered the children (Kellett, 2005) and developed their perceptions of themselves as experts. Becoming a broker required knowledge and experience. Individuals or groups who graduated as brokers held a position of power. Rather than diminishing the position of the child during transition, I had in some ways begun to address the imbalances of power that exist between a researcher and the researched or between adults and children during a period of transition by involving the children in the research and, thus, enabling them to take back some control of the transition process (Clark and Moss, 2005). Arguably, in Foucault's terms, I had given the less powerful a voice.

I would argue, therefore, that active participation in the project (for example, choosing and preparing resources to support the new cohort of Year One children) empowered experts (like Joshua and William) to express themselves, their individual ideas and feelings. Actively seeking the children's voices in this way valued them as responsible, individuals with the capacity to act meaningfully on matters which concerned them, thereby strengthening their sense of agency (Devine, 2002). I knew how disempowering it felt, however, when my own perspectives and ideas were sought but not listened to or acted upon, or when they were paid 'lip service' to but 'acted upon' in a tokenistic and superficial manner.

8.7 Beyond the research intentions

Although the research was intended to stimulate change in the specific context of our school, my engagement in the study has a broader impact which leads to development in the wider community. The project creates a platform for communication between young children, early years/year one practitioners and management level (for example, head teachers) and its effects have begun to

motivate thinking at other levels.

Bradbury-Huang (2010) highlights the importance of making meanings through 'local' knowledge amongst peers and how this can become pertinent to wider audiences. The intermediary role relates to the research facilitating listening between children and other professionals with an interest in children's perspectives. This is a way of extending the process of listening beyond the bounds of adults who are in daily contact with young children.

At the request of the Local Education Authority, I have become an intermediary. I now disseminate the findings of the research and the resulting changes in Year One practice in our specific context to practitioners, head teachers and other professionals concerned with Year One and transition across the county through numerous presentations, posters and workshops. This mentoring role provides an opportunity to share thinking relating to the work in progress and provoke thinking in other practitioners and their approaches to practice in their own contexts. In particular, the training opportunities focus on how the Year One curriculum can be adapted to support children's transition from Reception (for example, by personalising the learning experiences for Year One children) and the importance of children's voices in this process. The most noticeable impact of this is the way in which practitioners and head teachers have begun to reflect on the nature of Year One practice and how this typically represents adult perspectives with little or no input from children.

At a local level this dissemination activity exemplifies Moss' notion of 'agnostic politics' (2007, p.34) where I act as the role of 'interpreter' between two differing paradigms. The research and Year One practice in our school has become a reference for other settings, inspiring an exploration of other ways of working that actively involves children in shaping their own and other children's experiences. As the momentum of this movement continues to grow, the research has the

potential to change the discourse of Year One and improve the transition experiences for an increasing number of children.

8.8 What I learnt from the research

During this study I developed my knowledge and understanding of transition, participatory research, Year One and the children, as well as my knowledge of how to be an effective learner, thus I experienced the empowering effects of knowledge on a number of levels.

The research process made me more sensitive to children's experiences in the classroom (BERA-RSA 2014, Leat, Thomas and Lofthouse 2014). I developed an informed knowledge of the issues relating to early school transitions (Petriwskyj 2005: Fabian 2013 and others) and a deeper understanding of transition from the children's perspective. Engaging intelligently with evidence from multiple sources enabled me to approach the issue of transition in my school from an informed starting point (Lofthouse 2014). Research evidence and a developing sense of theorised practice strengthened my positioning as a 'transition improvement activist' in my immediate context and empowered me to make creative responses to the children's recognised needs (Lofthouse, 2014). As a result I was able to implement evidence based changes to my practice that improved the quality of transition for the children in my school. Practitioner enquiry enabled me to use, reflect on and develop research and theory through my own practice, so that theory and practice informed each other and became intrinsically linked. I would argue, therefore, that my role as a researcher has impacted positively on my role as a teacher and vice versa.

From a conceptual stance, my engagement with research enabled me to gain a knowledge and understanding of the complexities of participatory research, including ethical issues such as authenticity, tokenism and manipulation (Spyrou,

2014). This encouraged me to become more critically reflective of my own and other's practices and claims in relation to children's voice, participation and empowerment (Palaiologou, 2013). From a pragmatic stance, I developed a repertoire of classroom strategies to facilitate children's voice, which I continue to use in the classroom today.

Through my engagement in the research, I developed a range of personal attributes, including perseverance, self-discipline, resilience, innovation, creativity thinking, determination and problem-solving abilities that shaped my subjectivity and identity. In addition, I experienced the satisfaction of 'learning leaps' (Wisker, 2006). I became more critically reflective and developed a strong sense of theorised practice (Lofthouse, 2014). As I engaged with the research and literature, my critical thinking; development of theoretical concepts and ability to critically analyse and evaluate findings progressed far beyond the level I had achieved before. I began to work at a more original and creative conceptual level. The process of thinking, writing and justifying enhanced my critical thinking skills and I became more adept in demonstrating a personal critical voice. I also found my political views maturing as I scrutinised government policies, discovering them to be vehicles for political dogma rather than balanced discussions of practice.

8.9 Strengths and Limitations

8.9.1 Children's Voice

This research is underpinned by a strong commitment to children's voice which recognises, values and enables diversity. The research approach, therefore, invited, generated and valued a wide range of individual responses. This is a strength of the research. In this research children chose to focus their

contribution on areas of transition that they were knowledgeable of and that were important to them. This ensured that they had the knowledge and expertise to succeed as researchers and mentors. The research approach was responsive to the children's individual interests, strengths and perceptions. This made sure that all children could participate successfully. The research methods were not prescribed or predetermined. Children made decisions which influenced the direction of the research. This broadened the outcomes and facilitated rich and triangulated data.

8.9.2 Theoretical Framework

This research used a combined theoretical framework to explore power relations during a times of transition (see Figure 3.2 p. 63) This was part of the innovative methodology and a strength of the study. In this research Foucault's (1980) conceptualisations of power are situated within the context of school transitions through the work of Bronfenbrenner (1998), Bernstein (1990), Giddens, Gibson (1979), Lave and Wenger (1998) and others. Giddens's (1984) theories relating to the role institutional structures play in positioning individuals with respect to one another, Bernstein's (1990) conceptualisation of school rules and Gibson's (1979) theories relating to affordances lead to a deeper understanding of the way in which power becomes crystallised and embodied in the mechanisms and practices of school life. Bronfenbrenner's (1998) ecological perspective of the influence and connection between different areas of a child's life and the importance of interactions between microsystems enables a deeper understanding of Foucault's (1980) conceptualisation of power as a multidirectional force which operates on, through and from individuals in the context of school transitions. Lave and Wenger's (1998) theories relating to communities of practice, apprenticeship and brokerage provide an arena within which to explore theories regarding the relationship between power and knowledge. This combined theoretical

underpinning leads to a methodological approach which recognises the positive effects of power as mediators for transition.

8.9.3 Parallel Journeys

My journey of transition alongside that of the children was both a strength and a limitation of the research. My transition from Reception to Year One provided a unique perspective that was fundamental to understanding of the children's experiences (see p.74). Working together as co-researchers the children and I developed a close relationship and a profound understanding of each other. My personal experiences of the transition from Reception to Year One sensitised me to the nuances of what the children were saying and thus became a powerful research tool. I could relate to the children's experiences and feelings during transition because I was facing similar experiences and feelings. Shared feelings and experiences led to deeper understanding. Whilst this aspect of the research was powerful, however, the uniqueness of the context of this study is contentious. The children and I were both new to Year One. Our previous experiences were all grounded in Reception and we undoubtedly brought some of this discourse and practice with us to the new setting. This meant that Year One in our school during our inception year was not representative of a typical Year One. The outcomes of the research, therefore, are likely to be different to those that may have been generated if the children had transited to an established Year One teacher.

8.9.4 Teacher-Researcher Positioning

My positioning as a teacher-researcher was also both a strength and a limitation of this research. Engaging in self-initiated research, I had control over the focus and context of the research. My insider perspective generated more appropriate

research questions (Schafer and Yarwood, 2008). I had direct access to data and the ability to co-ordinate data collection. As I collected the data, I was able to make real changes to my practice, thus ensuring the connection between the research and my practice and making new ideas possible. The research was able to explore the challenges and barriers that Year One face in greater complexity than is possible in non-practitioner led studies because of my positioning. One of the benefits of engaging my own class as co-researchers in the research into transition was my relationship with the children. The pressures of time often prevent researchers in the field of participatory research from building a close rapport with child co-researchers. This, in turn, excludes them from the deeper layers of children's voices. My in-depth knowledge of the children as individuals, however, enabled me to access and evaluate different and more complex understandings of their perspectives. The way in which the research was situated in a specific context (Year One in our school) enabled a rich, in-depth study rather than a broader study across more than one setting.

Lack of funding and funded release time was a drawback to my position as a teacher-researcher. Throughout the research, I continued to work as a full-time teacher and often took on additional duties to help with the payment of my university fees and other expenses associated with my study. Academic study at doctorate level represented a steep learning curve. It was time consuming, impacting on both my professional and home life and often stressful and overwhelming. Access and opportunities to experiment with information technology, including data analysis applications improved my technological proficiency and opened my eyes to how information technology could further my goals. My limited technological experience, however, slowed the pace of my research and prevented me from making the most of the resources available to me.

8.9.5 Professional Development

The research was an accessible and valuable professional development strategy which enabled me to grow as a teacher, as well as a researcher. It enabled me to become more reflective, critical, and analytical about my teaching behaviours in the classroom. My professional intuition, collegiality and experience in teacher learning was enriched through my engagement with literature and classroom inquiry. This enabled change and improvement over unquestioned repetition of practices over time. The knowledge and experience I gained from the research developed my capacity for autonomous professional judgments. I felt less vulnerable to and less dependent on external answers to the challenges I faced. This enabled me to move out of a submissive position. The relative simplicity of the research design made it replicable and achievable on a wider scale, thus connecting to practice outside of my classroom. Across my local educational community and beyond, I became a curriculum innovator, disseminating the research and its findings, initiating change in the practice of others and thus contributing on a wider scale. The connections I made with other teachers and researchers reduced the feelings of frustration and isolation I had often felt as an early years educator and boosted my sense of status and worth.

8.9.6 Relatability

In disseminating this research to a wider audience, I remain mindful that effective early years teaching is an adaptive process based on decisions about when, with whom and under what circumstances certain practices should be implemented. The findings of this study are unique to our school and this cohort (McMillan and Schumacher, 2006) and cannot be generalised across other contexts. The research cannot be used in other settings as a decontextualised practice with inadequate attention paid to the local context, learning needs, strengths, background, and culture of each individual child. What can be applied widely, however, is the

innovative methodology and the framework that was developed as a result of the research.

8.9.7 Other Considerations

Early years transitions are influenced by a broad range of factors which have not been fully explored in this research, including home-school links, cultural practices and previous transitions. Further research into other factors that influence early years transition can only serve to make us better prepared to support young children.

The research approach represents a deliberate manoeuvre to diminish disempowerment and a conduit for children's voice, but it cannot lay claims to complete empowerment or freedom of voice. Engaging children as co-researchers alters the dynamics of power, but cannot eliminate them (Kellett, 2011).

8.10 Recommendations

My recommendations based on the research findings are:

- Practitioners should elicit children's perspectives and use them as a starting point for developing transition-friendly Year One practice.
- Schools should take steps to encourage open dialogue amongst adults and children about transition in order to make transition visible.
- Practitioners should think creatively about how they view transition and utilise the positive aspects of power/knowledge relationships to enhance their approach to transition.
- Practitioners and schools should elicit and listen to children's experiences of transition and take steps to involve them deeply in transition processes, not only by eliciting their perspectives of transition but also by using their

expertise to improve transitional outcomes for themselves and others.

- Schools and Practitioners should constantly check that contemporary policies relating to curriculum focus and pedagogic practices driven by an accountability and performativity agenda are not inadvertently skewing children's learning experiences and opportunities for development.
- Practitioners should broaden their perspectives of 'voice' and 'listening' beyond the spoken word, in order that they may facilitate a culture of multiple listening.
- Practitioners should use children's expertise as a brokerage tool in transition.
- Practitioners need to listen to children. Not the tokenistic kind of listening that pays lip service to children's voices yet rarely hears their voices, but genuine, active listening which recognises children as experts in their own lives and acts upon what they are saying.

8.11 A final word from the children

This project was set up to give the children a voice about transition through developing a participatory arena. It is only apt, therefore, to end this paper with some of their words about it:

'I think we helped the Receptions because they know what happens in Year One now'

'It would have been good if the Year Ones had made stuff to help us to get to know about Year One when we were in Reception'

'It's better if we tell the little children about Year One because we know what it's like and what sort of things they might be worrying about'

'Olly isn't worried about moving up to Year One anymore 'cos I've shown him around and he's got lots of things to help him, like the map and the *talking tins*'

'If you know about what's coming (like Year One) it's not so scary. It's when you don't know you get scared'

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Abbreviations

DfE	Department for Education
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
EFYS	Early Years Foundation Stage
ELG	Early Learning Goals
EMC	Every Child Matters
GLD	Good Level of Development
NNA	National Assessment Agency
NFER	National Foundation for Education Research
NC	National Curriculum
NLS	National Literacy Strategy
NNS	National Numeracy Strategy
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills.
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.
SATs	Standard Assessment Tests
SPAG	Spelling, punctuation and grammar

Glossary

Age related expectations	Expected attainment for children nationally at the end of year.
Agency	A sense of control and the capacity to act. A subjective awareness of initiating, executing and control one's own actions in the world.
Below expectations	When the nationally expected attainment has not been reached.
Carpet Time	Practice of children gathering together on a to engage in a learning activity (usually delivered by adult).
Common Exception Words	Exception words are words in which the English spelling code works in an unusual or uncommon way. They are not words for which phonics 'doesn't work', but they may be exceptions to spelling rules, or words which use a particular combination of letters to represent sound patterns in a rare or unique way.
Early Years Foundation Stage	Education and provision for children (in England) who are under the age of 5.
Good Level of Development	A good level of development (GLD) at the end of the early years foundation stage (EYFS) is a key measure of primary school effectiveness. A child is deemed to have attained a good level of development if they attained at least the expected level of within the three prime areas of learning and within literacy and mathematics.
Identity	The individual qualities, beliefs, personality, looks and/or expressions that make a person or group.

Key Stage One	Key Stage 1 is the legal term for the two years of schooling in maintained schools in England and Wales normally known as Year 1 and Year 2, when pupils are aged between 5 and 7.
Key Stage Two	Key Stage 2 is the legal term for the four years of schooling in maintained schools in England and Wales normally known as Year 3, Year 4, Year 5 and Year 6, when the pupils are aged between 7 and 11.
Mosaic Approach	The Mosaic approach is a multi-method approach in which children's own photographs, tours and maps can be joined to talking and observing to gain deeper understanding of children's perspectives on their early childhood settings.
Move Up Day	(Usually taking place in the summer term) children spend the day in the classroom they will be moving into in the following September to support their transition.
Performativity	Performativity is a technology, a culture and a mode of regulation that employs judgements, comparisons and displays as means of incentive, control, attrition and change –

	<p>based on rewards and sanctions (both material and symbolic). The performances (of individual subjects or organizations) serve as measures of productivity or output, or displays of</p> <p>'quality', or 'moments' of promotion or inspection. As such they stand for, encapsulate or represent the worth, quality or value of an individual or organization within a field of judgement (Ball, 2003: 216)</p>
Phonics Screening Check	The phonics screening check is given to all children at the end of Year One. It consists of 40 words of which 20 are non- words and 20 are 'real' words. Children are asked to read and the words to check they can accurately decode.
Pre-School	Education provision for children in England who are under the age of 4.
Reception/Year R	First year of school in England (4 year olds)
Year One	Second year of school in England (5 year olds)
Year Two	Third year of school in England (5 year olds)
Standard Assessment Tests	Tests taken by school students as part of the national curriculum (in the UK except Scotland). In the context of infant school education these are tests of reading, writing and maths delivered in Year Two.
School Readiness	Children who are prepared and ready for the demands of school or the next stage of learning.
Structuration	How the rules and resources of a setting or organisation impact on groups and individuals in the course of social interaction.

Schoolification	The practice of preparing children for 'school readiness', often by introducing a formal approach to learning.
Summer born	The term 'summer born' is used to refer to children born from 1 April to 31 August.
Talking Tins	A small circular device used to record and play back short verbal messages.
WAGOLL board	<i>(What a good one looks like)</i> The purpose of the WAGOLL boards is to provide children with examples of good work on which to model their own writing or maths.

Appendix One: Parental Consent Letter

Parent/Carers Years R, 1, 2

Megan Taddeo

..... School

FS Teacher at.....

Dear Parents and Carers,

In order to improve the quality of the Transition process between Years R and 1 across the federation, and as part of my PhD study, I would like to carry out some research with children across year groups in each of the schools. I have outlined the details of this in the Project Information Sheet which is attached.

During the project, the children will have the opportunity to research transition using their preferred methods. This may involve children taking photographs around the school. None of these photos will be made public and all of the children will remain anonymous in my research record keeping and write up. As parents or carers you will be welcome to view the research at any point. Upon completion of my research, I will provide you with a summary of the findings. I will be following the ethical guidelines of BERA and the University of Winchester throughout my study.

If you are happy for your child to become involved with this project, please sign the consent form below and return it to me by... I will be seeking consent from children on a daily basis throughout the project. You may also withdraw your child from the study at any point. Should you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Megan Taddeo

Foundation Stage Teacher.....and Research Student University of Winchester.

Child's name.....

* I give permission for my child to be involved in the Transition research as detailed in the Project Information Sheet.

* I do/do not give permission for transcripts of interviews with my child to be archived.

* I do not want my child to be involved in the Transition research.

* Please delete as appropriate

Signature.....Parent/Carer Date.....

Appendix Two: Project Information Sheet

Researcher Name: Megan Taddeo

Date: 26 April, 2012

What is my research aim?

To develop a theoretical and practical framework for young children who have recently experienced transition to participate in supporting others.

What will the research explore?

- Young children's perspectives of transition from the Foundation Stage to Key Stage.
- Their present participatory skills in research into their experiences of transition.
- How their participation in research can be further developed.
- How their findings and experiences can be used to support new groups of children moving into Key Stage One.

Who will be involved?

Reception and Year One and Two children.

(Parents/carers will have the right to choose if their child becomes involved in the study. Consent from children involved will be sought on a daily basis. Parents/carers will be able to withdraw their child from the study at any point.)

What research methods will I use?

During the project, I will be encouraging children to demonstrate their perspectives of transition using their preferred methods. This may include informal discussion, drawing or photographs. The children will have the opportunity to share their findings and experiences with children in other year groups.

What will I do with the data I collect?

I will be analysing the data obtained in terms of issues relating to transition. Reflection on the process will enable me to work with colleagues across the federation to develop a framework for the participation of 'expert' children in Key Stage One in researching and disseminating ways to support others facing transition. Any data relating to children will be stored securely. All names will be

changed so that the children, their parents, the settings and the staff will not be identifiable. Any photographs taken will be used by myself to analyse the data and write about the findings. No images identifying children will appear in my final thesis or be available in the public domain. Any information I receive will be treated confidentially and will only be utilised without names attached. Only transcripts for which permission has been given will be kept once the thesis is complete. All others will be disposed of securely.

What are the potential benefits of the study?

Children involved in the study will be able to express their views of what matters to them with regard to transition. Year One children will have the opportunity to develop new strategies that enable their participation in research. Year R children will benefit from the expertise of children who have recently experienced the transition from Year R to One. Adults involved in the transition process will have a better understanding of what matters to children with regard to transition. Staff and parents across will be able to use this knowledge to develop a programme of transition that responds to children's needs. This will, in the long term, benefit future cohorts of children.

How long will the study last?

It is anticipated that the study fieldwork will extend over a period of at least two years. It will, therefore, involve several cohorts of children as they travel through infant school.

Which Ethical Guidelines will I follow?

I will be following the ethical guidelines of BERA and the University of Winchester throughout my study.

Queries: Please contact - Megan Taddeo.....

Appendix Three: Teaching Assistant Role Description

- To record her observations and reflections relating to the research in a personal journal. Ensuring that pseudonyms (not real names) are used when referring to specific children.
- To share observations and reflections with the teacher-researcher, for example, journal entry, post-it note, verbal.
- To support children to gather the materials they require to make their resource from within the classroom or other areas of the school.
- To enhance the environment, when appropriate with materials that could further facilitate the children's ideas, for example, additional iPads for photographic and video recording and lolly sticks for puppet making.
- To support the teacher-research in audio and video recording, for example, discussion groups, tours.
- To report any concerns relating to the research, ethics, child participants etc.

Appendix Four: Transcription of initial discussion: Stage 2 Group A: Ben, Emily, Darren, Chloe, Katy

Teacher/Researcher: Can you remember what it felt like when you moved into Year One?

Darren: It was scary.

Teacher/Researcher: What made it scary?

Darren: You had to learn new things.

Katy: I thought the work would be too hard.

Ben: 'When you get into Year One it's not as hard as you think. I mean you think its going to be hard and the adults are going to be stricter but its not really. You get used to doing more work and the adults are very nice and friendly'

Darren: I didn't like writing much.

Chloe: The big playground felt scary cos of the big children.

Teacher/Researcher: How about you Emily?

Emily: I was worried that I didn't know the adults.

Teacher/Researcher: *Did anyone help you settle into Year One?*

Emily: *Edward helped because he knew all about Year One. He told me about the Queen's portrait and you got to be an artist and he told me about the café and about extra playtime on Friday.*

Jessica: *Owen made me feel a bit scared about moving up cos he said there was lots of hard work in Year One*

Ben: *I knew Mrs. Howe was friendly because 'I saw her on the cake stall at the Spring Fair. I bought a cake an she said it looked yummy*

Darren: *I got a cake from Mrs. Howe too.*

Teacher/Researcher: *Who else went to the summer Fair? (most children said yes)*

Chloe: *Mrs. Howe was at sports day too.*

Darren: *and Mrs. C.*

Teacher/Researcher: *Why do you think some people and special events make moving up better?*

Emily: *because they're people who already know what it's like. They can tell you and show you what to do and when you do move up day or go to the Queen's birthday party you get to see what to do in Year One*

Ben: *Now we know what happens in Year One we can tell and show the new children*

Teacher/Researcher: *That's a great idea Ben. What will the new children need to know about Year One?*

Ben: *Don't run in the classroom*

Teacher/Researcher: *Can you run in the Year R classroom?*

Ben: *Not inside but in Year R you can go outside to run when you want. We don't go outside as much because we have lots to do.*

Darren: *Oh Yeah, we only have a small outside space but we do have the big playground.*

Emily: *That's cos ' the Year Rs need to practice on the bikes – we don't – so they get the bigger area and more time to play outside*

Teacher/Researcher: *What else do they need to know?*

Darren: *All the rules*

Teacher/Researcher: *What rules do they need to know?*

Katy: *Listen to the Teacher/Researcher*

Jessica: *Keep the classroom tidy*

Chloe: *They need to know we look after the toys and games*

Darren: *Yeh, 'cos in Year One there's not so many chances if you get something wrong.*

Ben: *We could tell them about Reading Groups. They need to know about phonics and that we do it every day.*

Chloe: *I think we should tell them some of the good stuff we do, like in Year One we learn to be real portrait artists and we get our own art pad and art pencil and authors – like writing books and poems an scientists – testing out stuff for Sophie*

in San Francisco that cos when you get older you get to learn more interesting things than you did in Reception

Katie: Yes we should tell them about the projects.

Teacher/Researcher: Goodness. There's lots to learn about Year One isn't there.

We'd better think of some ways to help the new children.

Appendix Five: Transcription of initial discussion: Stage 2 Group B: Polly, Billy, James, Mary, Oliver

Teacher/Researcher: *What did you feel like when you first moved into Year 1?*

Billy: *A bit worried.*

Teacher/Researcher: *Why did you feel worried?*

Billy: *I didn't know what it would be like.*

Oliver: *I was sad to leave Year R cos I was going to miss the bikes.*

James: *I was happy about moving up to Year One. I knew we could learn new things and there were new things to play with. I like the Lego. We didn't get Lego in Year R. There's computer games too and in Year One you get to write in books and go in the big playground. I knew Year 1 would be good because I went to the Queen's tea party.*

Polly: *I wasn't sure at first.*

Mary: *I felt a bit strange. It's different in Year One.*

Teacher/Researcher: *How is it different?*

Mary: *You don't get a tray in Year One. You leave your things in your book bag and it goes in a box. I had fairies and princess stickers on my Year R tray.*

Oliver: *I had dinosaurs on mine.*

Polly: *Sometimes my book bag gets put into the wrong box and I loose it. Special things don't get lost so much in Year R 'cos they go in your tray.*

Teacher/Researcher: *Is there anything else that's different?*

Billy: *You have to do a lot more writing in Year One.*

Oliver: *Lots of writing. Much more than in Year R.*

Polly: *We do a lot more maths because we are older and smarter*

Billy: *They do lots and lots of sitting and learning in Year Two*

Polly: *You have to learn more when you get older*

James: *In Year R it's fun work. In Year One its middle fun work. But in Year Two there's no fun at all*

Polly: *We can tidy up quicker in Year One because we don't do so much making so*

there's less mess

Teacher/Researcher: What other learning do you do in Year One?

Oliver: We do better projects in Year One

Billy: I like the projects The Year One projects are real projects like cars and being healthy. When you are older you get to learn things that will help with important things – like helping Mrs C. get fit and designing cars for the next Wacky Race'

Billy: We have more responsible jobs to do

Teacher/Researcher: What sort of jobs?

Polly: Sometimes you have to go to the staff room to get the bell. You have to knock the door, 'cos the Teacher/Researchers will be having coffee. Sometimes you get to go in the staffroom to get the bell. There's biscuits in the staffroom. When you get to the playground you can ring it. Everyone has to stop and listen when the bell goes

Billy: The Teacher/Researchers only choose children who are sensible and grown up to get the bell.

Teacher/Researcher: Do you think anyone can go in the staffroom?

Polly: Only if the Teacher/Researchers say. You have to knock first.

Teacher/Researcher: Why do you think the staffroom's just for Teacher/Researchers?

Polly: It just is.

Teacher/Researcher: What do you think the new children should know about Year One? I mean what's important?

James: Reading groups are important. We could tell them about them.

Billy: They need to know to sit still on the carpet

Mary: and do good learning

Oliver: and you have to get on with your work in Year One

Billy: We need to tell them to look after our games and toys.

James: and be a good class mate

Teacher/Researcher: That's a lot of things to remember.

Polly: *They're the rules in Year One.*

Teacher/Researcher: *Do you think it will worry the new children if we tell them about all the rules at once?*

Polly: *May be.*

James: *We could only tell the new children about the really important rules.*

Teacher/Researcher: *Which rules do you think are most important?*

Mary: *Ones that keep you safe like not running*

Polly: *Maybe the ones that help you do good learning like listening to the Teacher/Researcher.*

James: *Yeah. The more you listen
, the more you learn.*

Billy: *Not hurting other children.*

Mary: *Looking after the classroom. Tidy up.*

James: *we could just tell them about the values*

Teacher/Researcher: *That sounds like a good idea. The school values are a good place to start. Did it help to know things about Year One before you moved up?*

James and Mary: **Yes**

James: You find out those things in the end but it can take a long time. If someone tells you at the beginning of the year it saves a lot of time and trouble

Appendix Six: Transcription of initial discussion: Stage 2 Group C: Peter, Lara, Hope, Charlie, Sophie

Teacher/Researcher: How did you feel when you first moved into Year One?

Sophie: It was different from Year R.

Teacher/Researcher: How is it different?

Lara: *In Year R you can look in all the drawers. In Year One the Teacher/Researchers open the drawers*

Charlie: *It's much harder than Year R*

Peter: *Yeh, we do lots of writing and tricky maths.*

Charlie: *and we Roald Dahl books without pictures*

Sophie: *There are more Teacher/Researchers in Reception 'cos more children need help. They can't do things by themselves*

Peter: *we don't really get to go outside, except at playtime*

Charlie: *we don't have time 'cos there's lots more work to do*

Sophie: *We got Discovery Time lots in Year R. You can choose what you want to do.*

Peter: *We don't do Discovery Time in Year One.*

Lara: *Yes we do.*

Peter: *Well we do sometimes but mostly we have challenge time.*

Teacher/Researcher: What's the difference?

Charlie: *In Discovery and Challenge time the Teacher/Researchers get to choose what you do*

Peter: *No - in discovery time the children get to choose anything they want to do. In challenge time you still get to choose, but you have to choose from the activities that the Teacher/Researcher has chosen for that day*

Teacher/Researcher: Oh. Why do you think that is?

Lara: *'The Teacher/Researchers choose what you do in challenge time so that you practice what we have been learning. If they didn't you might choose something that isn't real learning and that would be a waste of learning time'*

Sophie: *I miss the creative area. We don't really get one in Year One. Well*

there is a bit of a creative area, but we only get to use it for project stuff then the Teacher/Researchers tell you what to make. You don't really choose.

Lara: *That's why the making area is small in Year One. In Year R they do making all the time so they have a bigger making area with more stuff.*

Teacher/Researcher: *So there was a lot of new stuff you had to get to know when you moved into Year One. How did you learn all that new stuff?*

Hope: *Mrs Collins helped us. She helped us in Year R too. She knows lots about both classrooms.*

Sophie: *Some of the Year one adults came to Year R to tell us all about Year One*

Teacher/Researcher: *How did you feel about moving to a brand new classroom with a new Teacher/Researcher?*

Lara: *It was ok because I knew all the other children. I think it would be a bit scary if you moved on your own.*

Teacher/Researcher: *Is there anything you think the new children might worry about?*

Hope: *Some children worry about changing for PE*

Teacher/Researcher: *Oh yes that can be hard at first. Are there people to help you?*

Hope: *the adults do, but it's still hard.*

Teacher/Researcher: *Do you think the new children need to practice?*

Hope: *Maybe.*

Sophie: *We could show them what to do.*

Teacher/Researcher: *That's a great idea. I'd like you to be thinking of other ways we can help them too.*

Appendix Seven: Transcription of initial discussion: Stage 2 Group D: Clare, Kane, Dylan, Matthew, Joshua

Teacher/Researcher: *Can you remember how you felt when you were about to move into Year One?*

Clare: *a little bit worried and a little bit nervous.*

Teacher/Researcher: *What do you think made you feel like that?*

Clare: *I didn't know if things would be the same and thought there was going to be stricter adults and I thought the work was going to be harder*

Teacher/Researcher: *What made you think that?*

Clare: *I don't know I just thought it would be*

Teacher/Researcher: *Are there any things that are the same?*

Dylan: *Um – the big bricks.*

Clare: *Mrs. Collins.*

Teacher/Researcher: *Does that help - having an adult you know already in the new classroom?*

Clare: *Yes because you don't feel shy with them.*

Teacher/Researcher: *So what do you think are the most important differences?*

Kane: *The work is really really hard. We have to do lots of writing and maths and really really hard stuff.*

Dylan: *There's more tables and chairs in Year One, cos' we do more work.*

There's not really much room on the carpet for building and stuff

Clare: *The writing area in Year R is bigger and you have lots of interesting things to write with – Angry Bird pens and glitter pens and stuff like that. In Year One, we usually just write with pencils*

Matthew: *In Year R you can look in all the drawers. In Year One the Teacher/Researchers open the drawers*

Clare: *I didn't know where everything was in Year One. And I felt nervous of new people.*

Matthew: *I wasn't worried about going to Year One, I was excited.*

Teacher/Researcher: *What were you excited about Matthew?*

Matthew: *All the new stuff to play with and going to break on the big playground.*

Clare: *I was worried about play time in the big playground'*

Teacher/Researcher: *What other things do you think might worry the new children?*

Dylan: *They could be worried that the Year One work will be too tricky*

Kane: *Oh Yeah, like they might worry about using bigger numbers in maths*

Matthew: *We could show them the big number square so they know where to look for help*

Teacher/Researcher: *So what do you think are the most important things we should tell the new children about Year One?*

Dylan: *Don't be silly on the carpet*

Kane: *Make sure you find a listening spot on the carpet so that you can do your best learning*

Dylan: *Don't run in the classroom*

Kane: *Don't leave the tap running*

Clare: *Make sure that you put paper in the white bin so that it can be recycled and your fruit waste in the grey bin so it can go on the compost*

Matthew: *Always remember to choose your lunch when you come into school. If you forget the dinner ladies will not know if you've bought your own lunch or if you are having school lunch*

Kane: *Well they need to know the actions to Jesus is the light of the world always* (Kane gestures)

Kane and others: *Jesus is the light of the world always* (all gesture as they have been taught by Rev. Steve)

Kane: *You need to know it when Rev Steve comes to do worship*

Teacher/Researcher: *but what does it mean?*

Kane: *It just means Jesus is a big light – that's all. We should tell them not to*

talk in worship and to sit with their legs crossed.

Clare: They need to know that the Teacher/Researchers are nice and they will help them with things they find tricky

Teacher/Researcher: Mm, that's lots of things to learn. Now we need to think of how we can help the new children learn about all those important things.

Appendix Eight: Transcription of discussion. Stage 3: Deciding on a resource. Children: Polly and Clare

Teacher/Researcher: Have you thought about how you could help the new children?

Clare: We thought we could show them round.

Polly: and we could help them by showing and telling them what to do

Polly: Oh **Yes and we're going to put on a puppet show to help them. Like we had last year.**

Teacher/Researcher: **The Moving On Puppet Show?**

Clare: Yes.

Teacher/Researcher: That's a good idea. What makes you think it will help?

Polly: **The puppets can tell them all about Year One.**

Teacher/Researcher: It sounds like it helped you to move on to Year One.

Clare: **Yes it showed you you don't need to worry.**

Teacher/Researcher: I think it's a lovely idea. What are you going to do?

Polly: We are going to make the puppet theatre and the puppets, then we'll practice what to say.

Clare: **I'm going to be the little girl puppet. Polly's puppet will tell me all about Year One.**

Teacher/Researcher: I can see you have thought it all through carefully. I am sure it will be really helpful to the new children.

Polly: **They'll like it cos its puppets.**

Appendix Nine. Transcription of Discussion. Resource sharing visit to Year R. Expert: Matthew and Novice: Cameron

Matthew: I've bought some photos. I took them.

Cameron: Can I see?

Matthew: Yes. This ones taken in Year One and I bet you know where this one is.

Cameron: Oh Yeh. It's in here. When did you take it? I didn't see you.

Matthew: You weren't here. **You have to look at the photos and spot the difference.** Do you know that game?

Cameron: I think so. They're different cos they're different classrooms.

Matthew: **Yeh. Of course but what's different in each classroom.**

Cameron: There's different things to do.

Matthew: And

Cameron: **There's lots of tables in that one.**

Matthew: **Yes. There are more tables and chairs in Year One and look there's a bigger whiteboard and do you know what they are?**

Cameron: No.

Mathew: There the challenge trollies. You don't have those in Year R.

Matthew: Do you see anything else?

Cameron: I'm not sure.

Matthew: Well I'll tell you then. Look. **In Year R there's messy play and playdough. Can you see messy play in Year One?**

Cameron: (Shakes his head)

Matthew: I bet you have one of those. (Points to the trays)

Cameron: Do you want to see?

Mathew: In Year One you don't get a tray. You don't get your own outside play area either. See there's only a little bit outside.

Cameron: Oh.

Matthew: See the difference now.

Cameron: Yes.

Appendix Ten. Transcription of Resource Review Discussions

Conversation with Clare, Polly and Jenny about their map resource.

The Resource: A map of the creative area



Teacher/Researcher: Tell me all about your resource.

Clare: It's a map.

Teacher/Researcher: Of the classroom?

Jenny: The making area.

Teacher/Researcher: That's interesting. Why did you choose to just show the making area on your map?

Jenny: Well Reception usually like making so they would want to know about the making area in Year One.

Teacher/Researcher: I see. That's good thinking. So Do you think the making area's important in Year One?

Clare: Er, well I think its important (especially when we do projects that have making like *Wacky Races*) but it's not as important as it is in Year R because they can make all the time.

Polly: But if we did making all the time we wouldn't get our other important jobs done – like Maths and Literacy challenges, but if the Year Rs know where everything is they can go there quickly when there is time to make. You don't always get time to finish what you are making in Year One.

Teacher/Researcher: So your map will help them make the most of their free time.

Polly: Yes.

Teacher/Researcher: Show me around your map.

Polly: That's the art trolley and those are the tables they can use for making. Those are the modelling boxes (pointing to each)

Conversation with Joshua about his video resource.



Teacher: What have you decided to do to help the new children Joshua?

Joshua: Well they need to know how to draw faces. I could make a film to show them how to draw faces.

Teacher: That's an incredible idea Joshua. Would you like me to help you?

Joshua: I think I know what to do but you could help me if I get stuck.

Teacher; What resources will you need, Joshua?

Joshua: An ipad. Oh, and a pencil and my sketch pad.

Teacher: Will you need to practice first?

Joshua: I'm not sure. I don't think so. I have it all in my head.

Teacher: Well I think you should just go for it and see what happens. If you have to make more than one recording that's ok.

Joshua: Yes. I'll just go for it.

Conversation with Charlie about his Talking Tin Resource.

Teacher/researcher: Tell me about your resource Charlie.

Charlie: It's a Talking Tin Tour.

Teacher/researcher: That sounds interesting. How does it work?

Charlie: Well the new children follow a trail. It's a talking tin trail. They follow it around the classroom. They press the buttons on the talking tins to find out about where they are.

Teacher/researcher: That sounds like a brilliant idea Charlie. What sort of information can they find out from the tins?

Charlie: So if they find the tin by the fruit and they press it they will find out that they can help themselves to a piece of fruit.

Teacher/researcher: This sounds really good Charlie. How did you come up with the idea?

Charlie: Well, at the Roman Baths there's numbers you press on your recorder when you walk round and it tells you all about what you are looking at. I've been there and I followed the tour. They've got them at Stone Henge too, but the Roman Baths are best 'cos there's numbers just for children.

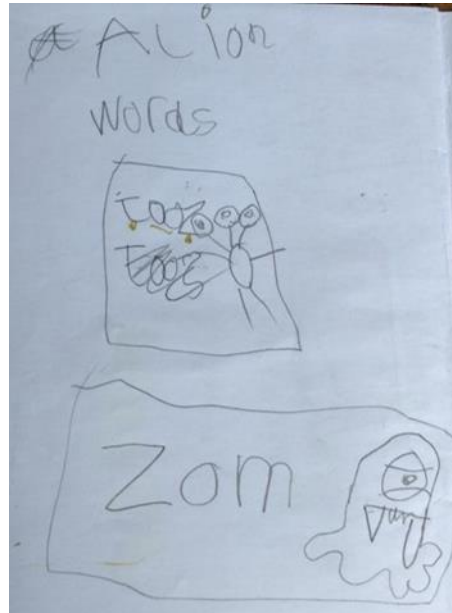
Teacher/researcher: I think the new children will love it Charlie. How will they know what to do?

Charlie: I'm going to show them how to use the first tin, then they can do the rest by themselves. If they get stuck on the rest of the tour I can help too.

Teacher/researcher: I can see you have really thought through your plan carefully Charlie. Well Done.

Appendix Eleven. Transcription of resource sharing discussions between experts and novices.

Transcription of discussion between Katie and Lily: Katie is showing Lily her poster



Katie: Would you like to see my poster Lily?

Lily: Yes Please.

Katie: What do you think?

Lily: It's funny.

Katie: That's 'cos its got aliens on it.

Lily: (laughs)

Katie: Do you know anything about alien words?

Lily: (laughs)

Katie: We learn them in Year One.

Lily: What?

Katie: We learn about alien words.

Lily: Oh.

Katie: They're more tricky than red or green words because they're not real words'

Lily: Oh.

Katie: But you can sound them out if you have learnt your sounds

Lily: We learn sounds in Year R.

Katie: Well in Year One you will get to use your sounds to learn alien words.

Transcription of conversation between Polly and Isla: Poly is showing Isla her map of the making area



Polly: Do you like making?

Isla: Yes.

Polly: Well this is my map of the making area. I can show you where everything is.

Isla: I make lots of things in Year R.

Polly: So here's where all the paper is kept and this is where the craft bits and scissors and things are. There are tables in the making area but they are used for writing and maths and other things too. You can't always do making.

Isla: When can you do making?

Polly: Well not as much as in Year R 'cos in Year One we have lots of other work to do.

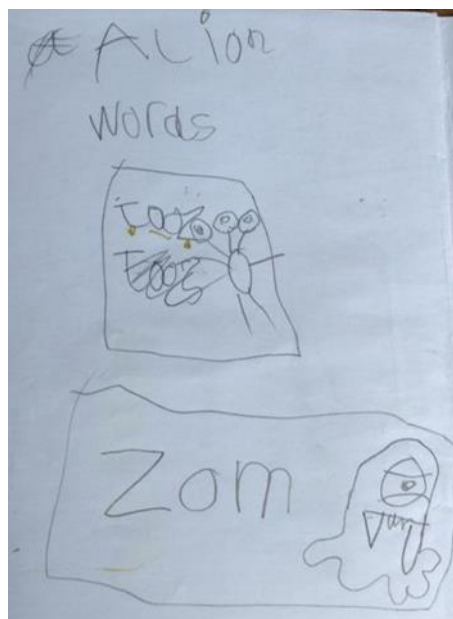
Isla: Oh.

Polly: Don't worry. You will get to do making in projects.

Isla: What do you make in projects?

Polly: Lots of things – cars, portraits, hats and things. The projects are really good.

Appendix Twelve. Review of Resource Interview with Katie and Billy



Teacher/Researcher: That looks interesting Katie. Is it to help the Year R children?

Katie: Yes. It's to put on the wall.

Teacher/Researcher: How do you think it will help them?

Katie: I think they won't know about alien words

Teacher/Researcher: Do you think alien words are important to know in Year One?

Katie: You have to learn them.

Teacher/Researcher: What will you tell them?

Katie: Alien words are just silly words that don't mean anything.

Teacher/Researcher: That might be a bit confusing for them.

Katie: You don't have to understand them you just have to read them.

Teacher/Researcher: What about telling them why you have to learn them?

Katie: I don't know why, you just have to

Billy: Anyway you have to learn them for the test.

Katie: It's a quiz

Billy: Are you going to tell the Year R's about the test quiz?

Katie: It might scare them.

Teacher/Researcher: Does it scare you?

Katie: A bit

Billy: Not me.

Katie: There's real words too – in the quiz.

Billy: How do you know?

Katie: My sister told me.

Billy: Oh

Katie: Alien words are tricky.

Billy: It's just a quiz. You get a sticker even if you do bad.

Katie: But it's better to do good then the Teachers are all happy.

Appendix Thirteen. Transcription of discussion with Junior school group: Mary, Ben, Emily, Rachel, Isabelle, Oscar

1. Teacher/Researcher: What it was like moving to
2. Ben: It was ok ish.
3. Emily: It's a lot bigger than(infant school).....I got a bit lost at first. There are lots more classrooms and Teachers and children. The mums and dads say goodbye and leave you in the playground.
4. Oscar: The playgrounds gigantic and much nosier than infant school. That's scary at first but you get used to it.
5. Ben: The playground's bigger but there's not as much stuff to play with. At..... (infant school) we had a trim trail and toys to play with and a sandpit.
6. Rachel: The lunch hall is really big and noisy. There's lots of dinner ladies and no one tells you what to do when you start. You just have to watch what the older children are doing and copy
7. Teacher/Researcher: That must have been difficult
8. Rachel: Its ok now. The lunches are better than(infant school)
9. Teacher/Researcher: Is there anything you think new children need to know about(junior school)?
10. Mary: Mrs..... runs the school. She is the most important person in the school. She tells the Teachers what to do and they tell the children
11. Ben: Going on the bus is really scary when you start. There's all the big children and you don't know where to sit. No one really tells you. I didn't like it at first
12. Isabelle: I was excited about going on the bus but I didn't like as much as I thought I would on the first day. It's quite noisy and you don't always know how long it will take.
13. Ben: Yeh. I thought I was going to into town or something. It was really scary.
14. Teacher/Researcher: Do you like going on the bus now?
15. Ben: Yeh. It's awesome really 'cos you get to chat with your friends on the way to school.
16. Teacher/Researcher: That sounds like fun.
17. Emily: I was a bit scared of the classroom too on the first day.

18. Mary: At (infant school) your mum or dad takes you to school so you don't worry. They can help you with your stuff and talk to the Teacher about things.
19. Rachel: It's always scary when you move to a new class because you don't know stuff and you don't know what will happen
20. Ben: Yeh. It's mega scary.
21. Isabelle: That's 'cos nobody tells you what it's going to be like. You just have to find out yourself.
22. Ben: Yeh. You do.
23. Rachel: You get used to it in the end.
24. Oscar: When I was worried about moving to my mum told me to remember when I moved to (infant school) and when I moved class before. I got used to it and you get to like the new thing
25. Ben: I said to myself, you have to keep reminding yourself that you always feel bad and odd when you move somewhere new but its will be ok in the end.
26. Emily: Did it work?.
27. Ben: Yeh. It worked.
28. Isabelle: If moving was easy you wouldn't be ready for bigger moves you do when you're an adult – like moving to a new country or house or something
29. Teacher/Researcher: What would do you think are the most important things for new children to know about....?
30. Isabelle: You have to learn new rules too.
31. Oscar: Yeh. There's lots of rules to follow and if you forget them or break them you get into trouble
32. Ben: There are so many rules at.....
33. Teacher/Researcher: Why do you think that is?
34. Rachel: The Teacher make the rules, not the children.
35. Ben: The Teachers make the rules 'cos they're the bosses
36. Mary: There's so many rules. You can't always remember them
37. Oscar: The Teachers are stricter
38. Ben: Some rules are the same as (infant school)

39. Oscar (to Emily): It would be fairer if the children got together to make some of the rules
40. Ben: When we were in Year Two we were the oldest in the school so we could make some of the rules, but now we're the youngest so older kids tell us what to do
41. Emily: Yeh, but if the Teacher let the children decide on all the rules they wouldn't all be sensible or safe or helpful. Like if the children said they wanted to play all day they wouldn't be learning. Sometimes the Teacher/Researchers know what's best for the children, even if they don't like it
42. Oscar: Yeh, but children should get to decide some of the rules because they're the ones that have to follow them
43. Teacher/researcher: What else do they need to know?
44. Oscar: You don't get to choose what you do at (junior school). The Teacher tells you what you're doing and there's a timetable that tells everyone what they have to do. Sometimes it gets a bit boring. It would be good to choose sometimes.
45. Rachel: We haven't really done much art yet and we don't get to do making anymore. Making is only at little school. Here you don't get time'
46. Ben: You learn interesting stuff but there's so much of it. It's hard to remember everything
47. Mary: There's lots of work at (junior school). A lot more than at (infant school). I mean even more than you do in Year One or Two. No one really tells you that's what it's going to be like. You just find out
48. Oscar: It's always more work when you move class.
49. Ben: The work's got to be harder when you get older otherwise you're not learning. By the time the work gets easy for you – whoosh – you're off again to the next year.
50. Emily: Sometimes William pretends he has lost his pencil or something so he doesn't have to do the work
51. Teacher/Researcher: So what does a typical day look like for you at Junior School?
52. Mary: Every morning we have Literacy first, then Reading, then Maths. We don't get time for anything else – only a quick play time
53. Ben: You get proper homework too. Lots of it. Sometimes it takes ages to do
54. Emily: We learn lots of difficult maths...and do lots and lots of writing.

55. Rachel: The Teachers tell you you have to write neatly but it's hard when there's not much time and you have to finish
56. Oscar: If you don't do your best writing the Teacher can make you do it again
57. Isabelle: If you write neatly and finish the Teacher is really happy
58. Emily: The teachers tell you where to sit. You're not allowed to sit with your friend cos friends chat and then you might not get all your work done
59. Ben: Some days you only get to see your best friend at playtime. That's not really fair
60. Mary: She has to get you to finish your work before you go out to play because otherwise Mrs....(head Teacher/Researcher) will say she's not doing her job properly, so it's not her fault really
61. Oscar: If you do good work in Maths or Literacy you can get a Good Work Award or Star of the Week.
62. Isabelle: You have to do more real learning like reading, writing and maths at school.....(because) you wouldn't be able to do a nice job when you are older if you didn't learn to do those things at school
63. Oscar: Yeh, but that's ok if your good at those things and you want to be someone who needs to be good at those things like a doctor or policeman, but I want to be a sports' coach like Phil so I should get to do more PE
64. I think it's because there's not enough time to do everything and we can do stuff like sports and art and craft at home or at a club.....At school the Teacher/Researchers have to teach you the important stuff
65. Teacher/Researcher: Is there anything you could do to help new children?
66. Oscar: It's a bit scary at first. You have to find your way around and sometimes you get lost....it would have been helpful to have a map
67. Mary: When we were in Year One we made maps to help the Reception children. We could make maps of (junior school) to help the Year 2s when they visit
68. Ben: Experts know it all 'cos they've done it so they are the best people to tell the new people
69. Mary: When you get to (junior school) the Teachers might tell a bigger child to show you round but they don't have much time because they have work to do. You can't remember it all 'cos there's too much to learn and they do it quick

70. Emily: I think it would have been good if the (junior school) children had come to talk to us at (infant school). Then we could have asked them questions and they could have told us all the stuff we had to know
71. Isabelle: The children could have taken photos of (junior school) and brought them to (infant school) to show us. It would have made it more real'
72. Mary: When we move to Year 4 I think we will be more helpful to the new children 'cos we know what it's like'
73. Oscar: We did that in Year One.
74. Rachel: If we sit with the Year Threes on the bus we could talk to them and tell what they need to know
75. Ben: I might make a poster to welcome the Year Threes and put it on the bus stop on their first day'
76. Mary: We could make books and take photos to help the Year Threes but we would have to do it in our own time 'cos we've got too much other work to do in class
77. Isabelle: The mums and dads get a book telling them all about (junior school) but the children don't. The Year Threes could have made a book to tell us about (junior school)
78. Teacher/Researcher: It sounds like you remember a lot of the things we did at.....(infant school) to help the new Year One children. Do you think what we did helped when you moved to(junior school)?
79. Ben: It's more scary moving to a new school than moving class but if you've moved class you know you don't feel bad forever.
80. Teacher/Researcher: Yes I can see it's a bit different when you move school. Do you think the work we did in Year One helped you to think differently about transition?
81. Mary: It made me know some of the things that help with transition. Like who you can go to for help and how you can help new children.
82. Ben: Oh Yeah. I know its best to go to an expert 'cos experts know it all 'cos they've done it so they are the best people to let the new people
83. Rachael: The children can tell the new children what it's really like. Teachers will only tell them the things they want them to know – just the good stuff'
84. Ben: 'I think every class should help the next class because it makes everybody feel better' 'When you know things it's easy but if you don't know things its tricky'
85. Mary: and If you are busy making things to help the new children you forget to worry about your next move so it helps you too

Appendix Fourteen. Transcriptions of discussions about the orientation visits

Transcription of discussion between teacher/researcher and William following the orientation visits

- Teacher/researcher: How did your visit go William?
- William: Good.
- Teacher/researcher: Who did you partner?
- William: Jake. I showed him my map.
- Teacher/researcher: Did it help him?
- William: I think so 'cos we took it with us when we did the tour.
- Teacher/researcher: Good idea. Did Jake like Year One?
- William: I think so, but he was worrying 'cos he thinks he's no good at writing and that's all we do in Year One but I told him that it is ok to be a apprentice and get the teacher to help. He liked the Lego in Year One so I think he feels ok about it now. I can show him other things he might like and Mrs. Winter put my map on the wall so the children can decide what they want to see when they visit.
- Teacher/researcher: It sounds like you made Jake feel much happier about things and your map will certainly help the other children. Do you think many of them worry about writing?
- William: Maybe.
- Teacher/researcher: Was it something you worried about when you moved to Year One.
- William: A bit.
- Teacher/researcher: Why do you think you were worried?
- William: 'cos everyone tells you you have to do lots of writing in Year One and if you think you're no good at writing its scary.
- Teacher/researcher: Is there a lot of writing to do in Year One?

William:

Yeah, but its not that bad when you get used to it.

Appendix Fifteen. Notes from feedback discussion with Reception Staff.

Tom: I think it's been great for the children in Year R. It's really got them talking. They're all talking about the tours and the resources Year One made. I think they're a lot more confident about moving on to Year One now.

Sarah: Yes. I loved watching them on the tours. The only ones that didn't really engage with the older children were the twins. That's not to say they didn't benefit from looking round. They just like to support each other. I know they absorbed a lot of information though because they can tell me all about what goes on in Year One.

Tom: The boys particularly liked the videos. They watched them several times and came back really excited.

Teacher/Researcher: Do you think they learnt anything from the videos?

Tom: Definitely. They told Jack exactly what he will have to do when they get to school in the mornings and they've offered to show him what to do. It's all because of the videos. It's such a good idea.

Sarah: Talking of good ideas. I loved Charlie's Talking Tin tour. So original. I recorded the children talking about it. (Sarah plays back recording)

You can't get lost in Year One 'cos there are round things you press and they tell you where to go next

Sarah: That's Lola chatting to Mia and Rachel.

Ask Charlie to show you the Talking Tins. You can find out about Year One by pushing the black buttons. There's lots of them in Year One

Sarah: I think that was Oscar talking to Darren.

Tom: Oscar told me we should make a Talking Tin tour of Year R to help new children too. It could catch on across the school.

Teacher/Researcher: I'd better order some more Talking Tins.

Tom: Yes. They've certainly been inspired by the resources. Ethan made that map (points). He said its so that visitors find their way round.

Teacher/Researcher: Wow. He's even had a go at labelling. Did he have help?

Tom: No he did it all himself.

Tom: This is Jenny's attempt at making a Peeghu (Tom shows photo of Jenny and her Peeghu). It's for her sister when she starts in Year R. Ivy asked me if I'd help her make a book today – Like Emily's – for the little children. You must ask the boys to show you their puppet show.

Appendix Sixteen. Transcription of discussion between Tom (Reception Teacher), Ivy (Novice) and Jack (Novice)

Tom: What did you find out about Year One Ivy?

Ivy: There's a CD player. You can listen to stories on it.

Tom: That's cool. Did you get to use it?

Ivy: Yes and I know how to use it now. It's easy. You can listen to the Gruffalo and Stick Man and there's some new story CDs. There's one about a princess, so it's a little bit the same and a little bit different.

Tom: Well it's good to listen to stories you know but it's also nice to listen to new stories.

Ivy: Yes.

Tom: I know who would like the Gruffalo CD?

Ivy: Who?

Tom: Ruby. She would be really interested to hear what you found out because she loves the Gruffalo story too.

Ivy: Oh.

Tom: You could show her how to use the CD player in Year One. Next time you're both there.

Ivy: Yes. 'cos I know how to do it now.

Tom: How did it go Jack?

Jack: Good?

Tom: What did you find out?

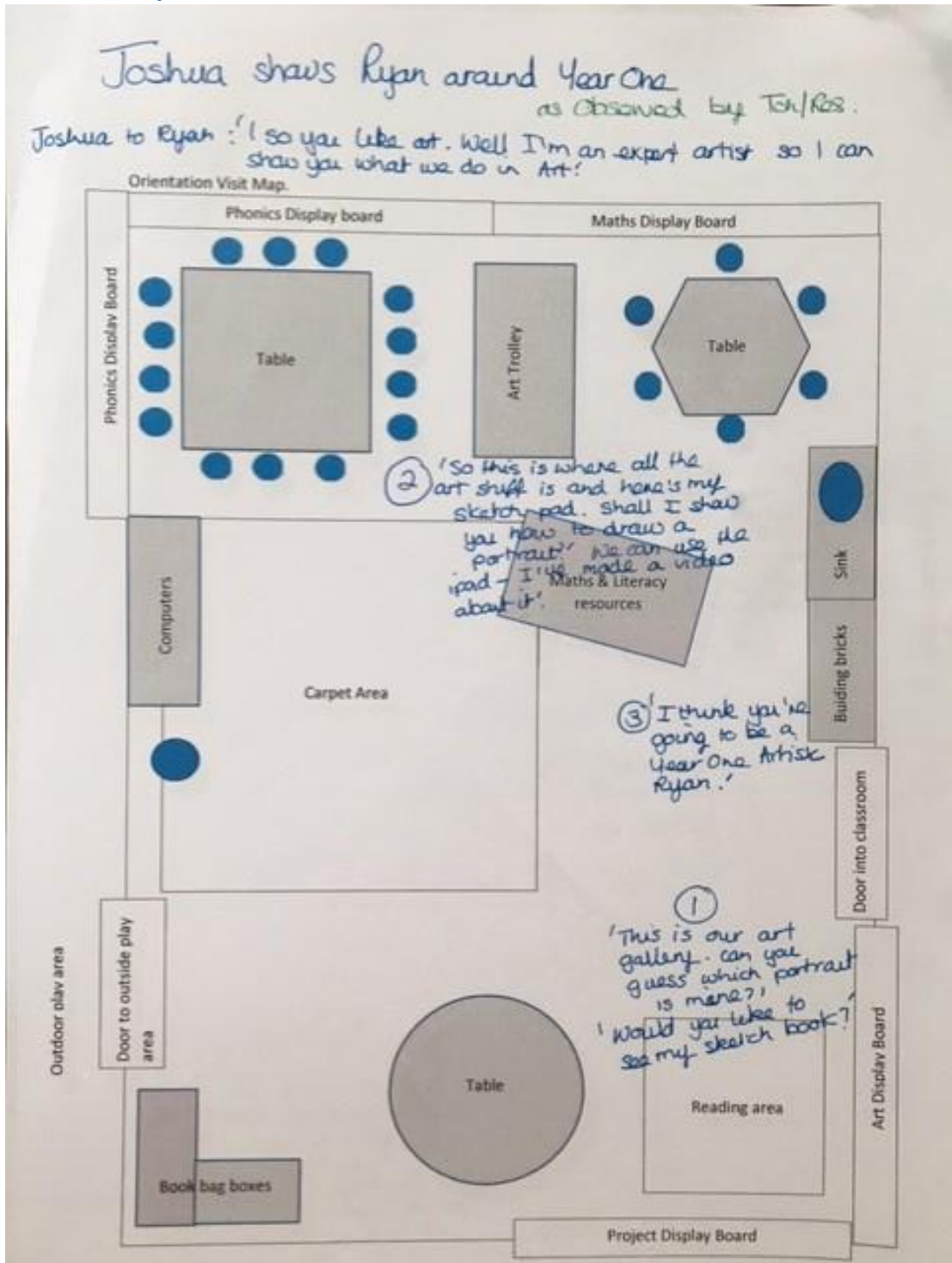
Jack: In Year One they have the big wooden bricks like we do. They've got Lego too – with racing driver people and wheels.

Tom: Wow. I wish I'd got to go on a visit. Did you get to play with the Lego?

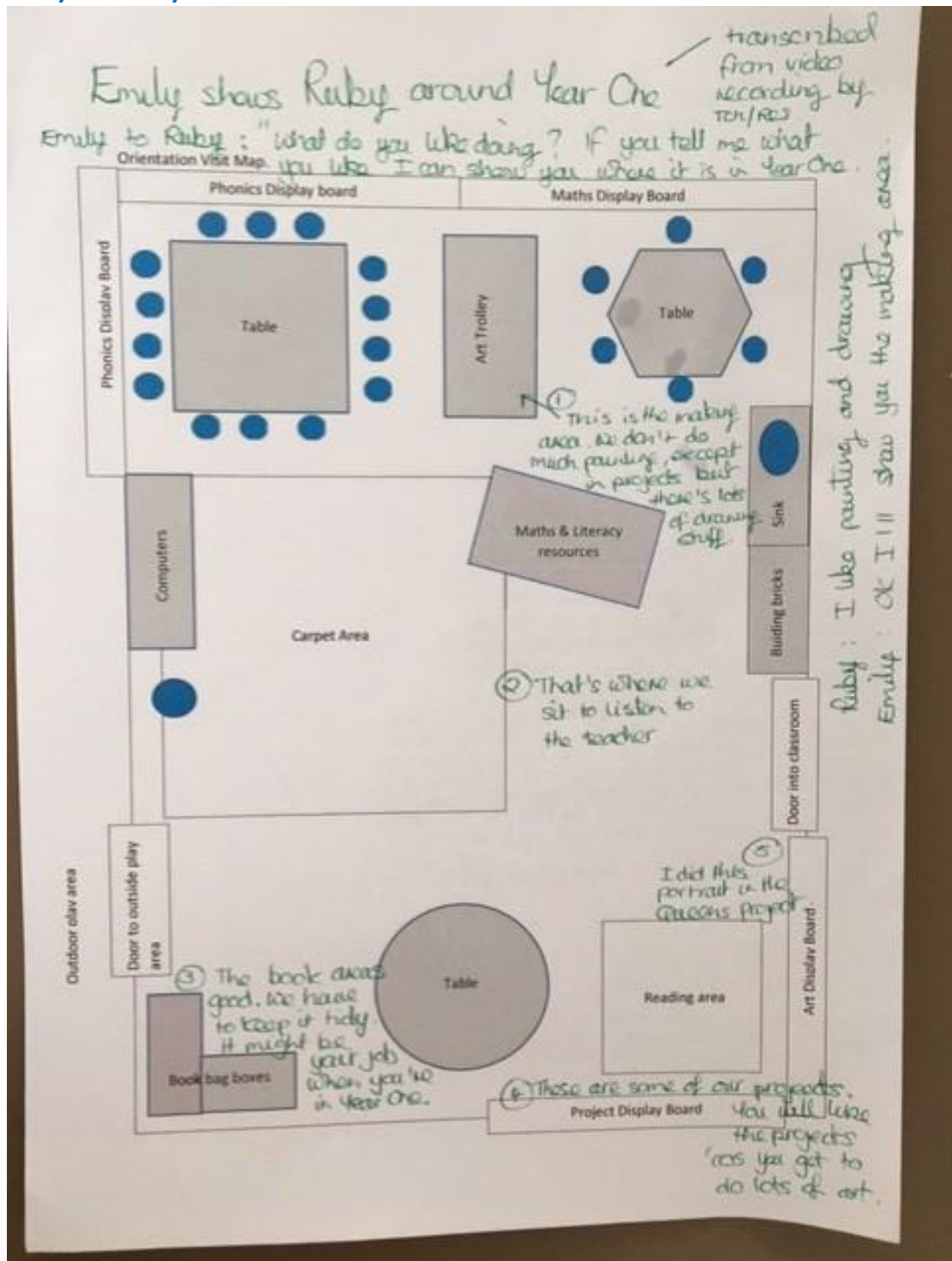
Jack: No, but I did play with the bricks. I'm going to play with the Lego next time I go. They've got computers too!

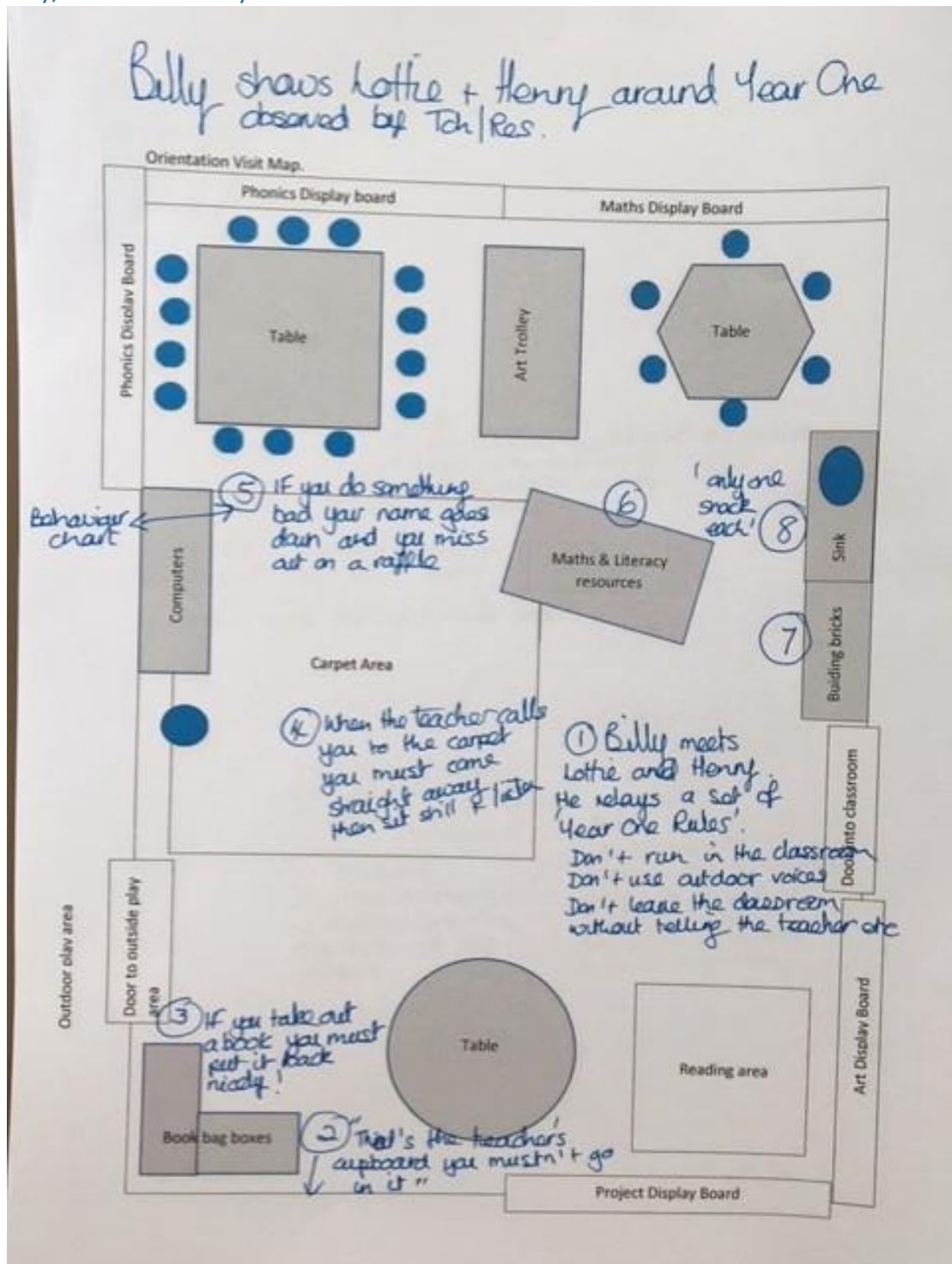
Tom: Goodness, Jack you did find out a lot.

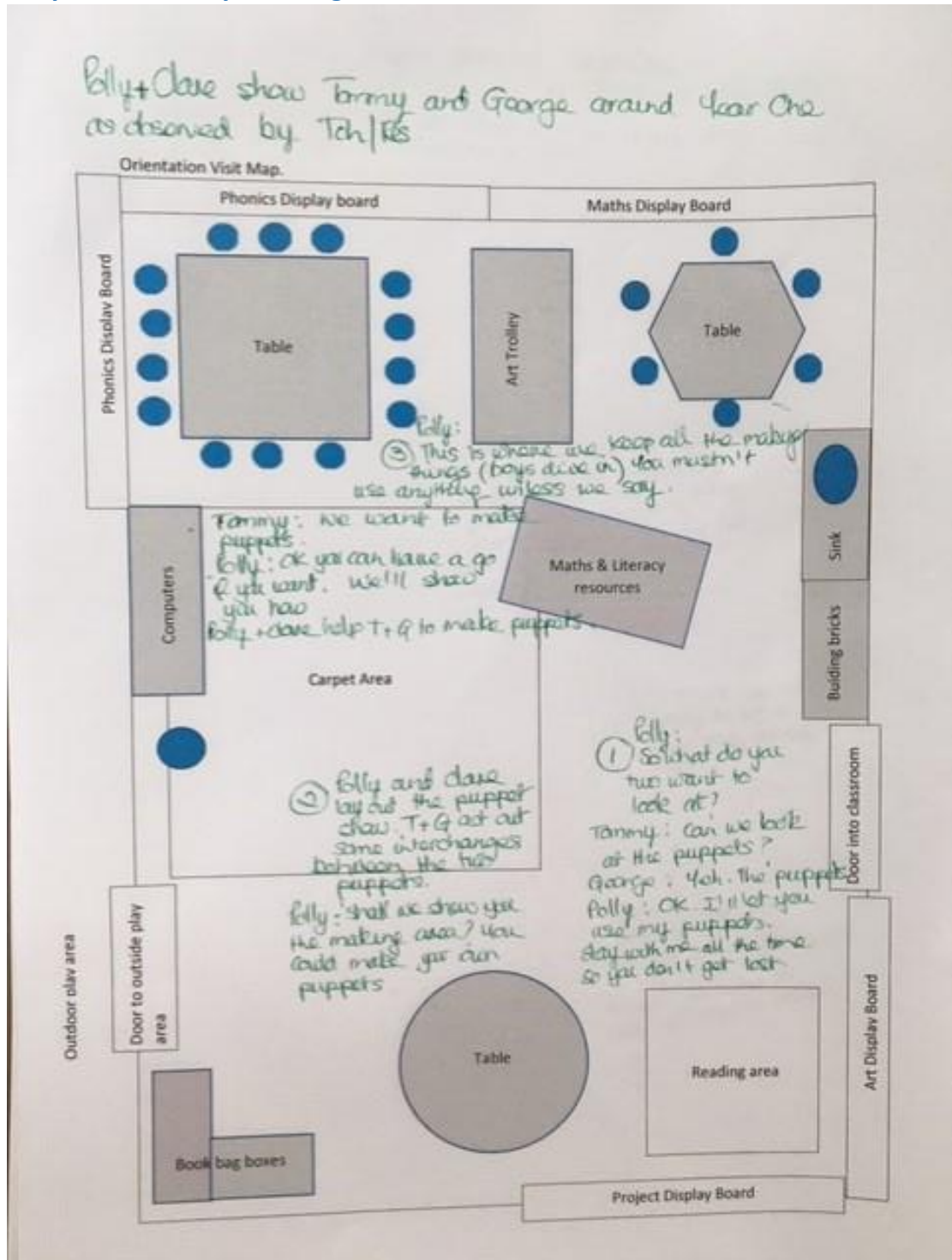
Appendix Seventeen. Orientation Visit: Annotated Maps
 Joshua and Ryan



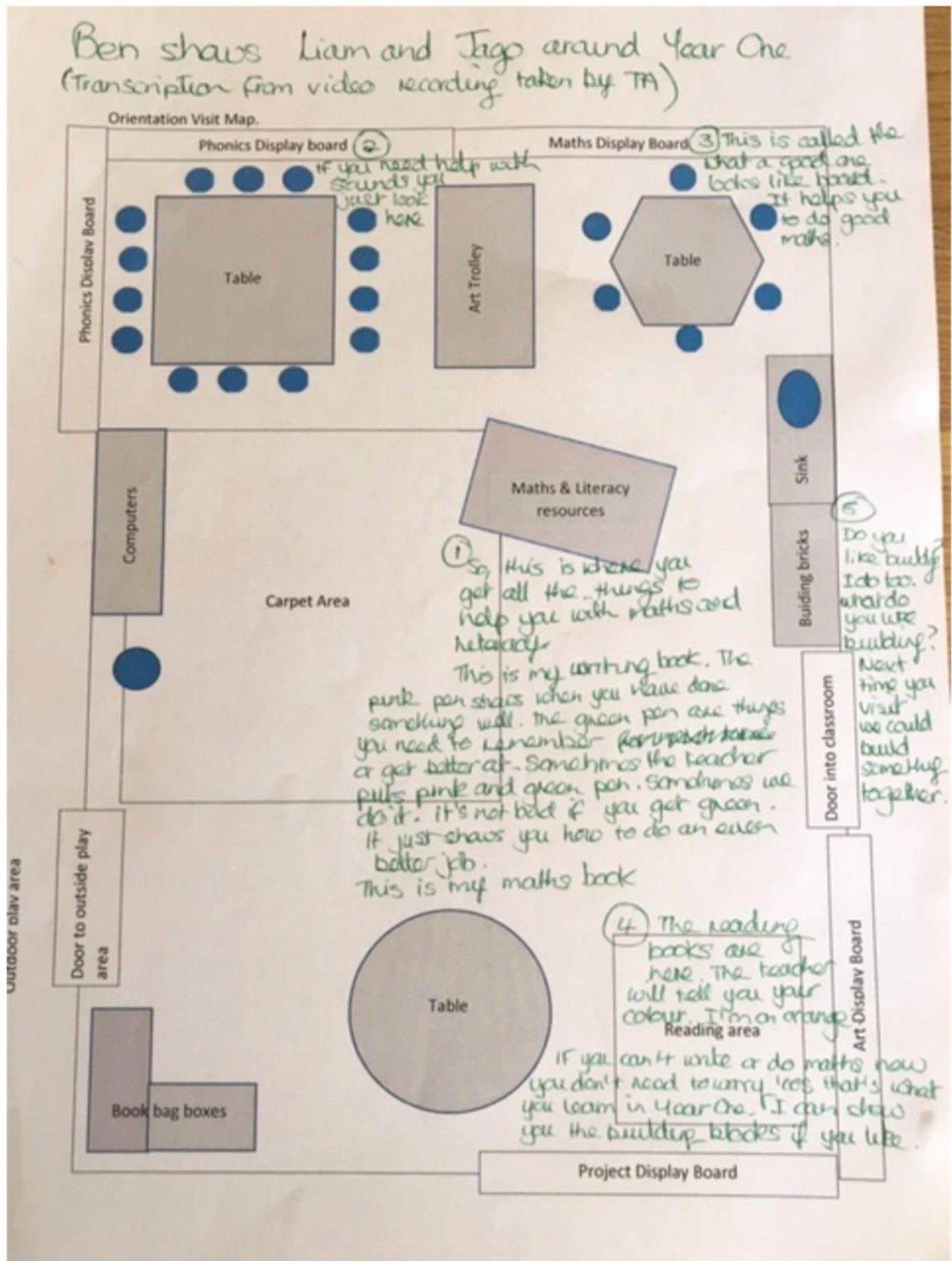
Emily and Ruby







Ben, Liam, Jago



Transcription of conversation between Billy (expert) and Harry (novice).

The two boys are looking at the walk to school programme on the computer.

Billy: That's where you record how you come to school.

Harry: Oh.

Billy: if you walked to school you click on the picture of the children walking.

Harry: I walk to school.

Billy: Then you have to click on the picture like this, otherwise the office won't know.

Harry: Shall I do it now.

Billy: No 'cos your not in Year One yet. You can do it when you are in Year One for real.

Transcription of Puppet show performed by Polly and Clare.

Polly: Welcome to our puppet show. I'm Elsa.

Clare: and I'm Emerald.

Clare: Do you do reading and writing in Year One?

Polly: We do lots of reading and writing but don't worry, I worried at first but now I'm good at it.

Clare: Can I learn to be an artist?

Polly: Yes. The teachers show you how to do good art and you do lots of practicing so you learn how to be an artist. It doesn't matter if you aren't good at art to start with.

Transcription of conversation between Tom (Reception Teacher) and Emily (expert) about her playground box.



Tom: What have you got there Emily? It looks interesting.

Emily: It's for the Year R's to use in the playground.

Tom: Fantastic. Tell me more.

Emily: Inside there's things to help a Reception child in the big playground. (Emily opens the box) The skipping rope and the colouring is so they're not bored in the playground. There's a plaster if they fall over, a tissue in case they cry. The stickers are so more people will be friends with them. They can cuddle the teddy if they are sad or miss their mummy. If they don't know how to skip I can help them.

Tom: That's very thoughtful Emily. What made you decide to make a playground box?

Emily: It's a bit scary when you first play in the big playground. There's lots of big children and your teacher isn't always there. Sometimes you can't find anyone to play with and sometimes you don't know the games. If you fall over someone will help you or they can look in the box for help.

Tom: Well I think your box is going to help lots of children.

Emily: Yes. Shall I show them?

Tom: I think you should.

Transcription of conversation between Teacher/researcher and Hope about her resource.



Hope: I made Peegu to help the new children.

Teacher/researcher: He looks friendly.

Hope: Yes. If they are feeling worried or scared they can hug him like a teddy.

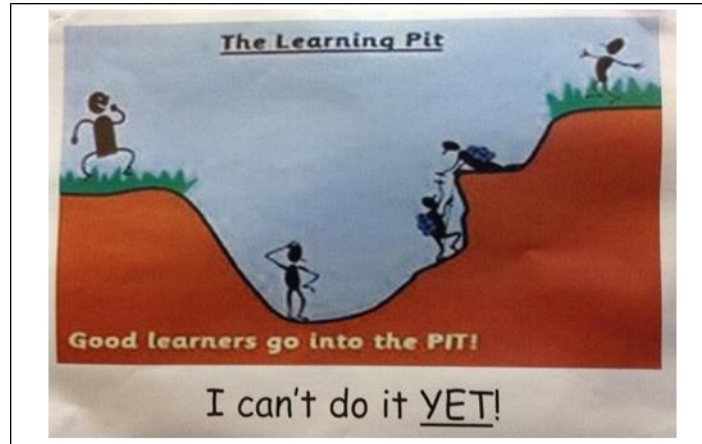
Teacher/researcher: What a great idea, Hope.

Hope: Yes. It will make them feel better.

Teacher/researcher: It certainly will. Who are you going to share Peegu with.

Hope: Anyone who looks a bit shy.

Transcription of conversation between the teaching assistant and Elliot about his Learning Pit photo.



TA: That's an interesting photograph Elliott. Why did you take that one.

Elliot: It's the learning pit.

TA: Yes but why did you choose to photograph it.

Elliot: To help the new children.

TA: How will it help them.

Elliot: The new children need to know that learning new things is tricky.

TA: Yes it is.

Elliot: You start off in the pit, but if you keep on trying you will get it in the end.

TA: That's really good advice.

Elliot: Yes. Moving into Year One is tricky. You have to learn new things and some of it's hard, but you mustn't give up.

TA: That's really important. I like your thinking.

Appendix Nineteen. The children involved in the research.

Child	Age	Gender	Background/Characteristics
Polly	5	F	Creative. Enjoys making. Younger sibling – not yet at school. A leader within her group of close friends.
Clare	5	F	Creative. Enjoys making. Middle of three children.
Jessica	5	F	Creative. Enjoys making. Only child. Likes to please her friends and teachers.
Ben	5	M	Mature for his age. Older sister at Junior School. Showing signs of working above age related expectations.
James	5	M	James attends breakfast and after school club at the school where he mixes with children from other year groups. He also belongs to the football club and Beavers. Showing signs of working above age related expectations.
Joshua	4	M	A passion for art. Low attainment in reading, writing and maths. Lacks confidence in his own ability to succeed at school.
Peter	4	M	Can be a follower of other children. Sometimes lacks confidence. Enjoys construction activities.
Hope	4	F	Shy. Only child. Often seeks adult assurance.
Emily	4	F	Lacks confidence in new situations. Initially found the transition to Year One challenging. Sometimes finds it difficult to talk about how she is feeling.
Katie	5	F	Older sister in Year Two. Younger sister at pre-school. A keen horse rider.
Katy	4	F	Quietly confident. Has a go at anything. Attends gymnastics out of school.
Kane	5	M	Older brother in Year 2. Chatty and inquisitive. Loves football.
Lara	5	F	Goes to breakfast and after school club most days. Often collected and dropped off to school by Grandparents. Both parents are teachers. Showing signs of working above age related expectations.
Chloe	5	F	Older sister in Year Two. Chatty and sociable. Attends Rainbows and athletics club.
Darren	4	M	Enjoys physical activity and outdoor learning. Inquisitive. Asks lots of questions.
Billy	5	M	Confident. Assertive and leader with peers. Participates in sports eg football, cricket.
Mary	5	F	Confident. Chatty. Younger sibling.
Oliver	4	M	Low attainment in reading, writing and maths. Enjoys construction activities.
Charlie	5	M	Older brother and sister at Junior school. Showing signs of working above age related expectations.
Sophie	5	F	Older brother just started Junior School. Independent. Loves drawing and writing.
Arthur	4	M	Good sense of humour. Willing to have a go.
Joe	4	M	Youngest in the class.
Elliott	5	M	Showing signs of working above age related expectations.
Callum	4	M	Only child. Often engages in solitary activities eg puzzles.

Jake	5	M	Older sibling in Year Two. Found transition to Year One difficult, particularly whole school playtimes.
Luke	5	M	Low attainment in reading, writing and maths. Speech and Language needs.
Martha	5	F	Quiet and shy.
Flo	4	F	Low attainment in reading, writing and maths. Seeks adult support.